WHAT PHYLLIS SCHLAFLY WROUGHT

ALAN WOLFE

THE MORAL CASE AGAINST REBUILDING NEW ORLEANS

ADAM B. KUSHNER

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# THE NEW REPUBLIC

## SWIMMING WITH SHARKS

How Young Republicans Learn to Attack

Franklin Foer

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**"THE BULLETS THAT KILL WOMEN AND CHILDREN, TERRORIZE THOSE SECURE IN THEIR SAFETY, AND DESTROY INNOCENT COMMUNITIES,**

**DO NOT COME FROM RIFLES, BUT FROM DEVIANT THOUGHTS AND MISGUIDED INTERPRETATIONS OF OUR GREAT RELIGION AND ITS NOBLE MESSAGE."**

*–The Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz*

The war against terrorism is being waged in the streets all over the world. But no matter how many battles we win, victory depends on winning the war of ideas. Just as Saudi Arabia has worked with our international allies to hunt down terrorists and choke off their funding, we are working to change the mindset that leads to extremism. Here are some of our most recent actions:

- *Modernized our school curricula to better prepare our children for the challenges of tomorrow*
- *Implemented a multi-year training and monitoring program to promote moderation in our mosques*
- *Suspended or dismissed more than 2,000 imams (prayer leaders) for preaching incitement*
- *Arrested more than 800 terrorism suspects resulting in the prevention of over 50 terrorist attacks*
- *Implemented some of the world's toughest banking regulations as attested to by the Financial Action Task Force of the G-8 countries*

Saudi Arabia has vowed to fight evil with justice, confront deviant thoughts with wisdom and noble ideas, and challenge extremism with moderation and tolerance. God willing, we will prevail

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## COVER STORY

*Franklin Foer* **20** **Swimming with Sharks** In the College Republicans, young GOPers learn to fight hard against Democrats—by practicing on one another.

## POLITICS & THE WORLD

**4** **CORRESPONDENCE** Why intelligent design isn't, &c.

*Adam B. Kushner* **6** **TRB | Sunken Cost** The moral case against rebuilding New Orleans.

*The Editors* **7** **Engagement Party** One small step for disarming North Korea, one giant leap for the Bush administration.

**8** **NOTEBOOK** Alberto Gonzales to the FBI: Watch porn, &c.

*Michael Crowley* **10** **Second Coming** Why the new Bill Clinton thinks the war on terrorism is small potatoes.

*Ryan Lizza* **11** **Berlin Dispatch: Bundesbog** Germans have a word for the brand of brash and narcissistic politics that has led the country to electoral gridlock: American.

*Husain Haqqani and Daniel Kimmage* **14** **Suicidology** Want to know who the jihadists in Iraq are? Just check out their online bios.

*Clay Risen* **18** **Building Model** What New Orleans can learn from Ground Zero.

*Joshua Kurlantzick* **38** **SEOUL DIARIST | Southern Democrats**

## BOOKS & THE ARTS

*Stanley Kauffmann* **26** **FILMS | Calls of the Wild** *An Unfinished Life* swaggers with little substance; nature approaches its extremes in *Grizzly Man*.

*Robert Brustein* **27** **THEATER | Theater after 9/11** Recycled revivals and escapist theater—in these times?

*Terri Witek* **28** **POEM** | *A Game for Those Abroad at Night*

*Robert Alter* **29** **Howard's End** *On Beauty* by Zadie Smith

*Alan Wolfe* **32** **Mrs. America** *Phyllis Schlafly and Grassroots Conservatism: A Woman's Crusade* by Donald T. Critchlow

COVER ILLUSTRATION BY *Michael Witte*

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# CORRESPONDENCE

## DESIGNS

JERRY COYNE PROVIDED A CONVINCING summary of the evidence for evolution, but he is less convincing in his attempt to conflate all intelligent design (ID) writings with biblical creationism and to dismiss them all as pseudoscience ("The Faith That Dare Not Speak Its Name," August 22 & 29). Certainly deism and creationism are quite distinct, although both accept intelligent design. Many writers who do accept biological evolution and a universe billions of years old nonetheless maintain that certain aspects of observable reality suggest a purpose that materialism does not adequately account for. See, for example, neurobiologist John C. Eccles's *Evolution of the Brain: Creation of the Self*. Such distinctions are lost on Coyne. Moreover, when a creationist, IDer, or anyone else points out the complexity of the vertebrate eye or of the blood-clotting process and expresses skepticism about whether natural selection can account for these phenomena, he takes a position that deserves a reply. To ignore this skepticism, or to dismiss it as mere pseudoscience, is not fair-minded. It is also legitimate for anyone to point out that certain scientists, such as Carl Sagan and Richard Dawkins, have pushed their theories to the point of endorsing an exclusively secular philosophy and to wonder whether such conclusions are really required by science.

Even more problematic is Coyne's apparent endorsement of the federal courts' involvement in the controversy over public school science curricula. As in so many other instances, the judicial practice of taking sides in the culture wars has made the whole issue of education far more bitter than it need be. The public schools are units of local government that should enjoy certain monopolistic powers. Why shouldn't local officials, rather than a federal judge, determine what is taught in them? The courts' efforts to fine-tune the exclusion of religion from the public schools have produced constant turmoil over what is allowed, what is forbidden, and what is required.

**JAMES W. SPRINGER**
***Peoria, Illinois***

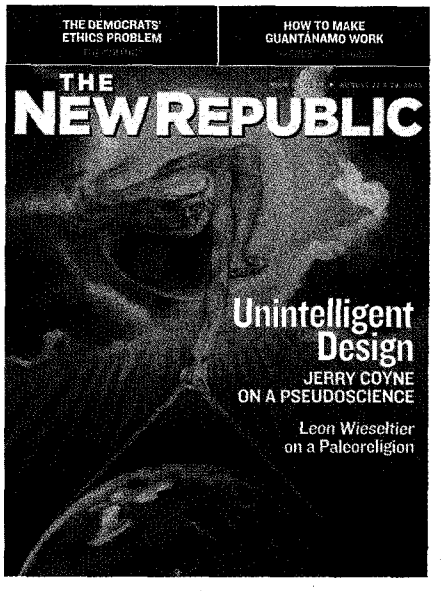
COYNE'S INCISIVE ANALYSIS OF THE intelligent design movement gives short shrift to the psychological basis for creationism's enduring appeal. ID perpetuates a comforting delusion that believers need in order to deal with what, too often, seems like meaninglessness of the human condition. Just as primitive people held on to their superstitions in all their manifestations, so, too, will modern people cling to creationism no matter what evidence is presented. It's what gets them through the night.

**WALT GARDNER**
***Los Angeles, California***

I THOROUGHLY ENJOYED COYNE'S ARTICLE on intelligent design, but it seems to me that he missed its most glaring fallacy. The basis of ID is that life on Earth is too complicated to have arisen without intervention from some designer. If this is true, then this designer would have to be substantially more complicated than anything on the Earth. Why, then, should he not also have been created by another, even more complicated, designer? This suggests an infinite number of designers. It is clearly ridiculous, but it is only the extension of the "logic" the proponents of ID avow.

**SANTIAGO BARREDA**
***Ajax, Ontario***

AS A SCIENTIST WITH A STRONG faith in God, I was taken aback by the lack of humility in some of Coyne's criticisms of the structure of the physiological systems we have been blessed with. No one should presume to understand the reasons a particular solution resulted from the long-temporal evolution of the universe. His example of a sequence of evolutionary changes to the eye is flawed in that he neglects to point out the necessary co-evolution of the neural system to transmit the more refined retinal images and the visual cortex to process and properly interpret the impulses. Still, I agree that ID should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HOW TO MAKE GUANTANAMO WORK
THE NEW REPUBLIC
Unintelligent Design
JERRY COYNE ON A PSEUDOSCIENCE
Leon Wieseltier on a Paleoreligion

not be allowed in the science classroom. It simply is not science. In fact, resorting to ID explanations may stifle the interest in science we are so desperate to reignite among our high school students.

**SANFORD I. LEVY**
***South Hadley, Massachusetts***

NEAR THE END OF HIS THOUGHTFUL and methodical critique, Coyne points out that many religious people see a serious conflict between evolutionary theory and what they believe to be a requirement for a purposeful life: a sensible system of morality and ethics. This is hard enough to come by in our complex world, even with humans sitting at the top of the heap. But it becomes much harder if "we are no different from other animals, not the special objects of God's creation but a contingent product of natural selection." Humans have a challenge in justifying much of their behavior if their lives have no more objective worth than those of a chimpanzee, cow, or mosquito. And what reason could we find for giving special priority to humans without resorting to "speciesism," which seems just an extension of the kind of ethnic

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and tribal partisanship that causes so much conflict in the world? I agree with Coyne that intelligent design is not the answer, but this fundamental problem may remain unsolved until our puny brains evolve further.

**DAVID J. SLATE**
***Evanston, Illinois***

**JERRY COYNE RESPONDS:**
James W. Springer notes, as have others, that I lumped together intelligent design creationism with other forms of creationism, including biblical literalism, scientific creationism, and the like. This conflation was intentional. While creationists do differ on some issues, such as the age of the Earth, they hide these disagreements, because they prevent creationists from showing a united front against their common enemy: science. Nevertheless, there are more similarities than differences, and two are fundamental. All creationists believe that, to explain the diversity of life on Earth, one must invoke supernatural intervention. And, as I show in my article, every creationist theory is vastly inferior to Darwinian evolution at explaining the known facts about nature. Springer also takes issue with the First Amendment, which, the last time I looked, was still in effect. To save "turmoil" in public schools, he'd rather dismantle the Constitution than prevent people from dragging their religious views into the classroom.

Santiago Barreda rightly points out an important fallacy in ID: Extension of its logic leads to an infinite regress of designers, making it self-defeating. It will not do to raise the theological point that the designer need not be explained, for that is a religious argument that does not belong in the science classroom. Sanford I. Levy chastises my "lack of humility" for criticizing "the structure of some of the physiological systems we have been blessed with." (I, for one, do not feel blessed by my bad back or wisdom teeth.) But, by saying that "no one should presume to understand the reasons a particular solution resulted from the long-temporal evolution of the universe," Levy is calling for us to abandon science. The fact is that we can, and have, answered a number of evolutionary questions, including why there are few mammals on oceanic islands and why humans develop a transitory coat of hair in the uterus. At any rate, humility before unexplained features of nature does not require us to invoke God.

Finally, Walt Gardner and David J. Slate note that evolution may destroy the solace one finds by believing creation myths that put humans at the top of the heap. Indeed, evolutionary biology does provoke questions about whether we should consider ourselves masters of the planet, able to destroy other species with impunity. But many of us would prefer to live with uncomfortable truths than with soothing fictions.

## RECONCILIATION

I STRONGLY DISAGREE WITH LEON Wieseltier's description of the theory of intelligent design as "an expression of sentiment, not an exercise of reason" ("Creations," August 22 & 29). Wieseltier uses Immanuel Kant and subsequent philosophers to show that ID "may establish only the wisdom of a creator, and not the existence of one." So what? Philosophy is not science any more than theology is science. He criticizes ID because it's a way to solve a "religious problem, not a scientific one." But it can be argued that modern philosophers were also solving a religious problem by throwing off the yoke of the Church. If I showed you a brand-new Boeing 747 and said, "A tornado yesterday ripped through a junkyard and out popped this fully functional airplane with onboard computers," you would think I was crazy. I think it's a greater leap of faith to believe that our lives happened by chance, rather than design. Since there is no evidence that the universe is formed by chance or any indications of it in our natural world, intelligent design should be seen as an acceptable scientific theory more valid than the prevailing view of independent spontaneous creation.

**ARYEH SCHULMAN**
***Kew Gardens Hills, New York***

WIESELTIER UNDERSTATES THE conflict between scientific evolution and theism, not just fundamentalism. Judaism and Christianity teach that a God of goodness created humans in his own image. To argue that we can reconcile this claim with the theory that modern humans evolved through a brutal, chancy, purposeless process of natural selection merely by reading the scriptures figuratively dodges most of the difficulties. A common assertion of so-called reconcilers for more than a century has been that God guided evolution in order to produce moral beings like us, but guided evolution is no more compatible with science than is creation in six days. Anyway, why would a sensible God bother with such a cumbersome way of achieving his goal? Fundamentalists point out, with much historical justification, that, once you start taking religion figuratively, there is no logical stopping place. Eventually, an omniscient, omnipotent, salvific God himself becomes a metaphor. Whichever side one takes in the war between science and traditional religion, one ought to recognize that it remains a real war, with some irreconcilable differences at stake.

**CHRISTOPHER CLAUSEN**
***State College, Pennsylvania***

**LEON WIESELTIER RESPONDS:**
Aryeh Schulman's "spontaneous creation" of a souped-up airplane in no way resembles the evolutionary view of life. And if by "science" he means rigorous thinking that begins with what can be known by logic and by experience, then he should not so blithely elide the difference between philosophy and theology, which is the difference between the establishment of belief and the protection of belief. Theology, like Schulman, cannot do without God. Schulman's impudent little "So what?" about philosophy is not surprising, since he demands nothing more intellectually respectable than a lesser leap of faith. I have never understood the prestige of the jumping metaphor, except as an admission of mental helplessness. One leaps when one is desperate and when the heights are frightening, as the heights of thought sometimes have been. I congratulate Schulman upon his escape from the danger.

I agree with Christopher Clausen that the more sublime the notion of the deity, the more detached from nature and history the deity becomes; but this is an inconvenience only for traditional religion. I am not, as a matter of principle, a "reconciler." It all depends on the question. The goodness and the sensibleness of the God of the Bible do not exactly scream to me from its pages. And the figurative reading of Scripture, when it is done without apologetic purposes, is an adjustment to a ferocious tension, a concession that certain propositions of science may demote certain propositions of religion to the more charming but less binding realm of myth. ■

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# Sunken Cost

TRB FROM WASHINGTON

AMERICANS DO NOT CAPITulate easily to adversity, which is why President Bush's elegy last week—and his stirring promise to rebuild—comforted us. "Americans want the Gulf Coast not just to survive, but to thrive; not just to cope, but to overcome," he said, standing in front of the St. Louis Cathedral in New Orleans, my hometown. "We want evacuees to come home for the best of reasons—because they have a real chance at a better life in a place they love." It sounds uplifting. But, sadly, it is wrong. New Orleans should not be remade. Not the way it was.

Dennis Hastert made the point first, three days after the storm, telling the *Daily Herald*, a suburban Chicago newspaper, that rebuilding "doesn't make sense to me. . . . A lot of that place could be bulldozed." He was shouted down as an insensitive defeatist. Jack Shafer soon explained in *Slate* that poverty, public school failures, the placid acceptance of urban crime, the insurance debacle, and the challenge of protecting a city built in a ten-foot hole would vitiate any settlement there. All fine reasons not to replicate pre-Katrina New Orleans, but none of them truly compelling, because they are secondary.

The *primary* case against restoring New Orleans isn't technocratic; it is moral. Eventually, the "Big One"—the Category Five killer scientists have warned residents to expect for 40 years—will make Katrina look tame. And, if we cannot see that major tracts of New Orleans are still unsafe, it will kill many more people. Those areas should be closed to development. Officials were negligent enough in not preparing for a storm of Katrina's power; why should they let New Orleanians return to harm's way?

Although Katrina destroyed much of New Orleans, it was not the Big One. It weakened and passed 30 miles to the east. And, although New Orleans flooded, the cause was not a storm surge that "overtopped" levees—which the Cassandras have always predicted would drown the city—but rather levee collapses along the canals that link the river with Lake Pontchartrain, which empties into the Gulf of Mexico. Those breaches allowed the lake's storm surge (rather than the river's) to flood directly into town. Now New Orleanians are likely to think the worst has come and gone.

Not so. When the Big One finally creeps up the Mississippi River delta, it will push a wall of water with it that spills over even the highest river levee. And New Orleans is only becoming more vulnerable, because the wetlands and barrier islands of southern Louisiana—the ones that have always borne the direct onslaught of storms—are eroding at the rate of one acre every 24 minutes, leaving little ground to sap hurricane surges. That makes the Mississippi levee system the only bulwark against the water, which it was never intended to be. In the wake of Katrina, there's talk of raising the levees to prevent overtopping. But the higher the Army Corps builds them, the faster they will sink into the soft terrain. And, as Columbia University geophysicist Klaus Jacob wrote in *The Washington Post*, "The higher the defenses, the deeper the floods that will inevitably follow."

Idealistic officials think they can devise better evacuation plans. But meteorologists cannot know until just before landfall where a storm will hit, and unnecessary evacuations have a Chicken Little effect, increasing the likelihood that residents will ignore the emergency order when the Big One really does arrive. That's why the mayor didn't evacuate New Orleans until just 21 hours before the storm landed. Furthermore, there is no way to shepherd away the 100,000 New Orleanians who don't own cars in so little time. Pundits have flayed the local, state, and federal governments for not caravanning these people to safety, but there will never be time to conjure 2,500 buses and 2,500 drivers in the tiny window between the knowledge of a storm's path and its arrival. Many New Orleanians survived Katrina on the lucky break that the flooding began only *after* the storm had passed. They won't be so fortunate again.

Nor can other schemes stop the Big One's surge, at least not during the current cycle of vicious hurricane seasons, which is supposed to last another 20 years. The best strategy for reconstituting the prophylactic wetlands is called Coast 2050, because that's the year planners expect it to be done. It calls for rerouting entire estuaries of the Mississippi delta. One civil engineer suggested a Dutch-style network of dams and dykes, but Holland's modern system covers 1,560 miles and was 50 years in the making. Plus, its seawalls do not need to sit in beds of pliant silt or withstand 175-mph squalls. Jacob actually suggested rebuilding New Orleans on a Venetian network of bridges and platforms. These people are fooling themselves, and the obstacle is not cash: Nature simply will not be cowed so easily or so soon.

True, not all of New Orleans is in jeopardy, and residents on high ground should not be barred from their homes. The real threat is to the lowest neighborhoods, such as the Ninth Ward and New Orleans East; they are unlike other disaster zones, where structural modifications and insurance policies can mitigate the damage. These neighborhoods are also the poorest and the blackest in the city. It is here that the moral case against consigning imperiled residents to their deaths is strongest. And yet New Orleans cannot exist without workers for the tourism and food-service industries, the ports, and the casinos. So, if there's no safe place to put the city's poor, there's no moral way to rebuild a viable economy. Some talk of relocating the poor nearby—perhaps across the river—and erecting a vast infrastructure of housing and transportation, enabling them to work in the city if they want. But Katrina's legacy shouldn't be a rich, white New Orleans mirrored by a poor, black shantytown. Cruelly, the storm gave the people with the fewest choices no choice at all; the government must resettle them elsewhere and force those living on high ground to endure the diminished economy or leave.

Millions of Americans live in dangerous places, and major cities often undertake risks knowingly. But it is one thing t know of a danger and argue that a fully developed, fully functional place like San Francisco should move away from a faul line; it is something else entirely to face the facts about a city now largely in ruin: It is no easy thing to wish your birthplac out of existence for its own good; the American habit, like with any challenge, is to fight back. But, in the end, demonstrations of perseverance aren't worth nearly as much as the lives they are meant to uplift. **ADAM B. KUSHNE**

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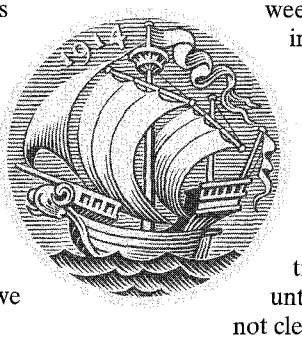
# Engagement Party

LET THE RECORD show that Colin Powell is finally skiing in formation with the Bush administration. In March of 2001, the then–secretary of state commented that his approach to North Korea would resemble the Clinton administration's—that is, a rigorous process of engagement, which had frozen Pyongyang's plutonium program and sought to stem its missile development. Almost immediately, however, President Bush contradicted Powell, distancing himself from the idea of talks with the North and saying that he had "some skepticism about the leader of North Korea." Powell, chastened, famously told CNN, "I got a little too far forward on my skis."

Powell is clearly a master of understatement. After the Bush administration accused North Korea of having an illicit uranium-enrichment program in October 2002, Pyongang restarted its plutonium program, triggering a nuclear crisis. But it was not until this week, nearly three years later, that the Bush team finally agreed to real negotiations to end the crisis. On Sunday, representatives from the six-party talks—the United States, North Korea, South Korea, Japan, Russia, and China—announced the basis for a mutually acceptable deal. In exchange for a verified end to the North's nuclear programs, the United States committed to a nonaggression pact with the North; working toward diplomatic normalization; and, along with its negotiating partners, providing a hefty aid package that could include a civilian nuclear power plant.

Although significant gaps remain between Washington and Pyongyang—most notably over the North's demand for a light-water reactor—even this basic statement of principles represents a sea change for the Bush team. After all, if the North's illegal weapons program is largely responsible for initiating the crisis, the White House's obstinacy has been largely responsible for drawing it out. Remember that, initially, the administration refused to talk to Pyongyang at all. When it finally did agree to meet the North, it was only to "talk," not to "negotiate." Hardliners like Vice President Dick Cheney and John Bolton, then the undersecretary of state for arms control, opposed discussions to end the nuclear program, demanding instead that the North unilaterally disarm and hoping that it would collapse under the weight of its own tyranny before compromise was necessary. Their central argument was that no agreement could secure denuclearization as long as Kim Jong Il retained power, rendering untenable any distinction between negotiation and appeasement. In 2003, Cheney rejected a Chinese plan similar to the deal reached this week, reportedly saying, "We don't negotiate with evil; we defeat it."



Such rhetoric may have felt good, but it didn't stop the Korean nuclear program. Kim expelled International Atomic Energy Agency inspectors, withdrew from the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty, and declared itself a nuclear power while Washington tsk-tsked. Pyongyang's reprocessing of 8,000 spent plutonium fuel rods at its Yongbyon nuclear facility—a red line under the Clinton administration—occurred without any consequence. In 2001, the CIA assessed that the North had enough material for perhaps two nuclear bombs; now Kim is believed to have enough for eight.

Bush's position has thus only weakened America's. Yet, according to *The New York Times*, the administration was prepared to stick to its hopeless course until China threatened to publicly blame it for obstructing an agreement. Over the weekend, the Chinese hammered out a deal with the North and presented it to the U.S. delegation as a fait accompli. "They told us that we were totally isolated on this and that they would go to the press," a senior administration official told the *Times*. The maddening thing about the deal is that we could have had it years ago; the irony is that it bears a striking resemblance to the 1994 Agreed Framework, which conservatives loathed.

Of course, Condoleezza Rice is correct that "the proof, so to speak, is going to be in the pudding"—that is, verifying North Korea's compliance. Moreover, the deal signed this week papered over the timing of Pyongyang's disarmament and its desire for a light-water reactor. Indeed, immediately after the deal was made public, the North said there was no way it would disarm before getting the reactor. That is an untenable position, and it is not clear whether it was a serious demand or merely an opening gambit for the next round of talks in November. Obviously, there is much work to be done. But, finally, after three years, the Bush administration appears ready to begin that work. If the stakes weren't so unbelievably high, Colin Powell might stop skiing long enough to smile. ■

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# NOTEBOOK

## FBI Looks at Porn . . . FDA Vet Met with Scorn

### NAKED GUN

Circulating around the FBI's 56 national field offices is an e-mail from Washington instructing that "one of the top priorities" of Attorney General Alberto Gonzales and FBI Director Robert Mueller is the creation of an anti-pornography squad, tasked with gathering evidence on material that offends notoriously elusive community standards—such as, the e-mail helpfully instructs, the sort of porn that features "bestiality, urination, defecation, as well as sadistic and masochistic behavior." According to *The Washington Post*, Gonzales and Mueller are asking for eight field agents, a supervisor, and assorted staff to stop what they're doing—presumably safeguarding national security—and start watching porn. As one FBI agent remarked to the *Post*, "I guess this means we've won the war on terror." Indeed, if Gonzales wants to call on citizens instead to do their part in identifying this national scourge, we here at The New Republic stand ready to take up the challenge.

### BEGUILED

It's a fact of life: Many prominent people in the American opinion industry, especially in its liberal flanks, are beguiled by the Palestinians and their leaders. And they do not have much of a place in their hearts for—well, not Israel exactly, but Israel's leadership. Until last month, when he pulled Israel out of Gaza—which they never believed he would—Ariel Sharon was just below George W. Bush on *their* axis of evil. And they still don't trust him: He's planning this, he's conspiring to do that. These are the same people who were, for decades, gulled, even enchanted, by Yasir Arafat. Now, seeing that Mahmoud Abbas may just not meet the standard for Palestinian authenticity—he does not appeal sufficiently to the Palestinian desire for revenge—they are finding a way to make Hamas respectable, even as the European Union has

*Alberto Gonzales*

begun to cleanse its smudged hands of further contact with the organization that has killed more innocent Israelis than any other. The proximate occasion for this line-up for Hamas was Sharon's statement that Israel would not help to facilitate the January elections for the Palestinian parliament if Hamas ran in them. Of course, Israel can do nothing about what happens in Gaza—it's the Palestinians' responsibility now, and good luck to them; but there remains the matter of the West Bank. The Oslo agreements, which gave birth to the Palestinian Authority (PA), made crystal clear that Hamas would be kept out of a Palestinian government. After all, it is a terrorist organization committed to the elimination of Israel. When Sharon says that he won't help the PA run elections in the West Bank if Hamas is a party to them, he means just that: Israel will not eliminate the checkpoints that protect Israeli civilians from more carnage and death at the hands of terrorists who show no sign of desisting. The Palestinians can vote for Hamas, but Israel will not make itself vulnerable to help them move from town to town to do so. Pretty reasonable. But *The Boston Globe*'s H. D. S. Greenway, the most consistently gullible American commentator on the Middle East, may stand for his colleagues on this matter. Sharon's statement, writes Greenway, "is a threat against democratic Palestinian elections." And then comes the apologetics for Hamas. Admitting casually that Hamas is a terrorist movement sworn to destroying Israel, Greenway writes reassuringly that "Hamas also has its civic side." Imagine the United States and its U.N. allies in Afghanistan facilitating elections in which the Taliban were allowed to participate as a recognized party. (Some former Taliban did run after rejecting the insurgency.) Come to think of it, on the civic side, the Taliban and Hamas are not all that different in how they regard women. Democracy is not just a process; it is also an ideal of a social and political good. It will not come swiftly if it comes stupidly.

### PLAN B AT THE FDA

The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) can't seem to make a clear-cut decision these days. Last month, the agency indefinitely postponed ruling on the over-the-counter sale of emergency contraception, prompting the director of the FDA's Office of Women's Health, Susan Wood, to resign in protest. Now, it seems to have had some trouble deciding on Wood's replacement. After the conflict with Wood, it's understandable that FDA Commissioner Lester Crawford might want to replace her with someone whose perspective more closely resembles his own. Perhaps that's why he initially seem to have settled on Norris Alderson. Both are trained veterinarians who worked together at the FDA's Center for Veterinary Medicine. Alder-

David Cowles

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son was introduced to the women's health office staff as the new acting director, according to *The Washington Post*, and his name reportedly appeared last week on a Health and Human Services directory. But the idea of a man trained in animal husbandry as the FDA's top champion for women's health appeared a bad joke to women's groups. So, in a strange reversal, the FDA announced Friday that the job was actually going to Theresa Toigo. Toigo seems to have some advantages over Alderson. She led the FDA's Office of Special Health Issues, which deals with patient advocacy, and collaborated with the Office of Women's Health on including women and minorities in clinical research. In other words, unlike Alderson, she's a *people* person.

## OPPORTUNITY KNOCKS

"I ALWAYS TRIED TO TURN EVERY disaster into an opportunity," John D. Rockefeller once famously said. Sadly, in the wake of Katrina, politicians and ordinary citizens alike have discovered the utility of his philosophy. President Bush has ordered prevailing wage and affirmative action programs rolled back in the Gulf Coast. No-bid contracts worth hundreds of millions of dollars have been handed to big Bush donors. Recovery plans drafted by federal bureaus and think tanks include such suspicious provisions as exemption from capital gains and estate taxes. Forty-four states, including some that have received few, if any, evacuees, have asked for federal disaster aid. And Katrina opportunism is not limited to the political sphere. On eBay, T-shirts that read THIS SHIRT LOOTED FROM NEW ORLEANS are on sale for $5 to $10 each. But thankfully, the Katrina-related activity on the Internet's largest auction house isn't *all* cause to despair of our national character. One woman has offered 100 percent of the proceeds from auctioning her "most 'valuable' bra," a 46D honey-colored lace Playtex, to a New Orleans charity. ■

# TNR commentary Excerpts from THE NEW REPUBLIC ONLINE

KAREN HUGHES AND KATRINA.

## Trivial Pursuit

**By Joseph Braude**

Newly sworn in as undersecretary of state for public diplomacy earlier this month, Bush confidante Karen Hughes spoke to staffers at Foggy Bottom about spinning Hurricane Katrina. "There are a lot of things being said about us around the world that aren't true," she said, according to *The Washington Post*. Hughes claimed that overseas pundits were wrongly attacking the White House for not doing enough to help hurricane victims or for doing it too late. "We need to aggressively challenge that idea around the world," she said.

Perhaps Hughes was inadequately briefed on what the fiercest U.S. critics *really* said after the disaster—because her analysis was irrelevant to the part of the world where her work matters most.

Perhaps Hughes was inadequately briefed on what the fiercest U.S. critics *really* said after the disaster—because her analysis was irrelevant to the part of the world where her work matters most. In the Middle East, where esteem for the United States is infamously low, public debates over the New Orleans tragedy did not focus on White House neglect. Instead, much of the discourse went to the heart of the theological and political questions that divide Arab Muslims today: namely their relations with God, with the United States, and with one another. One idea expressed by some in the Middle East was that Hurricane Katrina had been a punishment from God. The good news is that Arab liberals trashed the divine interventionists repeatedly in the mainstream media.

This debate was worthy of Hughes's attention because it concerned not only Hurricane Katrina, but also the values underpinning Islamic terrorism. A reader of Al Arabia's website who called himself Ibn Al Sham wrote that American civilians are "human beings before they are Americans." This plainly negates the legitimacy of Al Qaeda and its ilk, while those arguing the other side clearly regard Americans as something less than human. How the U.S. public diplomacy czar should address this topic of debate in the Muslim world is an open question; but the first step would at least be to acknowledge it.

CALIFORNIA AND SAME-SEX MARRIAGE.

## Doubt Less

**By E. J. Graff**

On September 14, the Massachusetts legislature overwhelmingly voted to uphold the state's same-sex marriage law, defeating a constitutional amendment that would have downgraded those marriages to civil unions. The week before, the California legislature voted to *enact* same-sex marriage, upgrading from its current domestic partnership law. True, Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger has threatened to veto the bill. But both votes were historic nonetheless: For the first time ever, American elected officials voted in favor of same-sex marriage, in full view of their constituents, in full knowledge of any political risks.

The lessons from California's larger triumph are twofold. First, California's gay activists have, for the past five years, employed some of the most innovative and successful political strategies in the nation—strategies that activists in other states, as well as activists hoping to influence policy at the national level, should study closely. Second, the doomsayers of the past year were simply incorrect: American opinion on gay rights is moving steadily toward full equality.

The doomsayers of the past year were simply incorrect: American opinion on gay rights is moving steadily toward full equality.

That march wasn't slowed by last November's results—and it won't be slowed by Schwarzenegger's expected veto, either.

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## Bill Clinton, messiah.

# Second Coming

BY MICHAEL CROWLEY

*NEW YORK, NEW YORK*

IT WAS ALMOST midnight at the Manhattan sushi hotspot Nobu Fifty Seven, and Bill Clinton was briefing Elvis Costello on the future of New Orleans. "First you've got to flush the lake. Just flush it," Clinton explained. Between the low thrum of club music and the starstruck admirers jockeying for position, it was impossible to hear much more, but one thing was clear: Clinton was really enjoying himself. As several celebrities—including Jeremy Piven of HBO's "Entourage," millionaire playboy Steve Bing, and the dapper Nobu himself—hovered on the margins, Clinton talked on ... and on ... and on. A few minutes earlier, Costello had looked starstruck himself. But now, his enthusiasm seemed to be waning. In fact, as Clinton droned on, I detected a certain glaze forming behind the smartly dressed rocker's famous black-rimmed glasses.

If Clinton noticed, he didn't care. These are the moments he lives for. This was the first evening of the Clinton Global Initiative—a sprawling three-day extravaganza that was equal parts Davos, Renaissance Weekend, charitable telethon, and self-celebration. The stated purpose of the conference was to bring together top thinkers and leaders from public and private life to help devise solutions to intractable world problems. But, most of all, this was the Bill Clinton show—a chance for the ex-president to talk an endless number of hapless (though often rich and famous) souls like Costello blue in the face.

Clinton's pathological need for adulation is well-documented. (When a friend of mine—who is not famous and had never spoken with Clinton before—ran into the ex-president at a hotel gym recently, he had to fabricate an excuse to escape his long-winded ruminations.) But, in New York last week, Clinton was after something more. It's not a jealous effort to remind Americans that life was better under his presidency, something he seemed keen to do during the first term of the Bush administration. Indeed, Clinton has steadily evolved into a less partisan figure: He has raised money for tsunami victims with the first President Bush and even appeared with George W. in the immediate aftermath of the disaster, declining to join the post-Katrina attacks on the Bush administration—all of which has some fellow Democrats exasperated. "People want to tell him, 'Do you remember the fucking things [the Bushies] said about you when you left office? Stealing furniture and trashing the place?' " one Clintonite whispered to me.

But no, it seems that Clinton doesn't want to remember. He has other plans, a larger mission that transcends the petty squabbles of U.S. politics. And his weekend in Midtown Manhattan offered a clue to what it is.

IN SOME WAYS, Clinton's summit was reminiscent of his free-form White House bull sessions. The guest list of about 2,000 attendees included dozens of old Clintonites, including Terry McAuliffe, Sandy Berger, Mack McLarty, Bruce Lindsey, George Stephanopoulos, Robert Rubin, Ira Magaziner, Richard Holbrooke, Madeleine Albright, and John Podesta. But now there were also corporate moguls (Richard Parsons of Time Warner, Starbucks CEO Jim Donald), dignitaries (Tony Blair, Shimon Peres, the emir of Qatar, King Abdullah II of Jordan), save-the-world celebrities (Angelina Jolie, Brad Pitt, Bono), and even Republicans (Rubert Murdoch, Condoleezza Rice, Elizabeth Cheney). All told, the Sheraton New York Hotel and Towers on 7th Avenue had become a kind of modern-day Mount Olympus. The conference's specific topics were suitably grandiose: poverty, climate change, religious strife, and Third World governance.

Even by Clinton's standards, these issues were considered in Oprah-esque fashion. The conference's several panel discussions were held on stages where participants reclined in pristine white armchairs under soft hues of pink and blue. (One discussion opened with a Coldplay soundtrack as Rice, Blair, and Abdullah strolled onstage.) Before another panel, a female staffer appeared in the media center. "Poverty? Poverty? Follow me," she said, before leading a clutch of hacks past a sign that read THE ESCAPE FROM POVERTY and into a dimly lit ballroom. Inside, Berger was presiding onstage before a white backdrop upon which POVERTY glowed in the kind of purple-pink lettering you might find outside a chic TriBeCa café. Poverty, of course, was an unfamiliar condition to those present, many of whom had paid a $15,000 registration fee to attend. At one point, one attendee whispered to an associate, "She has her own *helicopter*."

A little cognitive dissonance didn't preclude some genuinely noble results. Clinton claims to have secured well over $1.25 billion in specific commitments from conference attendees to fund projects in the conference's four target areas. The pledges, written documents that Clinton required donors literally to sign "on the dotted line," ranged from $1 million (to improve the justice systems of Bolivia and Peru) to a promise by Michael Jordan's mother (for a hospital in Nairobi) to $1.5 million for "cheap sustainable mobility"—translation: free bicycles—for Sri Lankan tsunami survivors. (Some savvy observers insisted that Clinton's figure was inflated, saying certain "new" commitments were hyped-up extensions of preexisting programs. One attendee joked that some pledges read like little more than the sponsoring organizations' mission statements. But a Clinton spokesman told me that "every commitment" was "done specifically for ... or inspired by" the New York event.)

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Clinton constantly announced the latest dollar figure like a telethon host. But he appeared even more interested in the big ideas at play. Many of the conference's panels and "breakout sessions" seemed to accomplish little, producing either platitudes, such as Saudi Prince Turki Al Faisal's pronouncement that "[w]e all value human life. ... Let us work together on all these issues," or small-bore ideas like a proposal to print more Korans in Europe to promote religious understanding. Such moments led one reporter to call her editor in a mild panic. "It's just, like, so incredibly boring. ... I feel like this is just a big waste of time."

For Clinton, it was just the opposite. Partly, it was a chance to show off his astounding grasp of global affairs, whether it was the 15,000 job losses in "the little mountain kingdom of Lesotho" due to an expired trade pact; or grain production in Argentina and Brazil ("because they have topsoil, in some places as deep as 22 feet"); or the promise of solar energy ("There are a million homes in Latin America today where the light and cooking heat come from solar generators ... at a cost of about a month's worth of candles"). This, in sum, was a man who wanted to demonstrate total understanding of the planet Earth.

And not just Earth—but also time, spirituality, and anything else you can imagine. In New York, Clinton sounded less like a politician and more like some mystical guru, an all-knowing caretaker of the planet. The first hint of this transformation came on the conference's opening day, when the former middle-class champion offered the politically taboo notion that, by forcing energy conservation and independence, higher oil prices are a good thing for the United States in the long term. Later, he mused about his mortality: "I've reached an age now where it doesn't matter what happens to me. I just don't want anyone to die before their time." Elsewhere, he riffed on the meaning of faith and religious harmony: "As long as you say, I believe there's a truth, but we're not in possession of it, we can all live together." And, perhaps most striking, in a discussion of climate change, Clinton cast the war on terrorism as a blip on the radar of history: "[W]e have become arrogant in the present. All of us. Osama bin Laden's arrogant in the present. I mean, he really thinks it matters if he blows us up and kicks a few thousand American soldiers out of Saudi Arabia or whatever. And we really think it matters if we blow him up, more than how we all live and how people will be living 100 years from now."

It was a startling statement to hear so close to Ground Zero. Yet there seemed to be nary a critic in the house. After Clinton's closing remarks on Saturday afternoon—which featured a genuinely affecting sermon on AIDS in Africa—one man turned to the attendee next to him and declared, "He'd be elected president of the world if he were to run!" But Clinton is finished running. Mere mortals can never grant him the title he craves: messiah. ■

## Berlin Dispatch

# Bundesbog

BY RYAN LIZZA

In more ways than one, Gerhard Schröder is the largest politician in Germany. I learn this Sunday night at the election party of his Social Democrats (SPD). Europe's most audacious leader has just finished his second "victory" speech of the evening. He and his entourage barrel toward me, a cyclone of movement that zigzags toward the outstretched hands of supporters and leaves a trail of upended furniture and crashing beer glasses in its wake. In omnipresent campaign posters dotting Berlin's streets, the chancellor's face is stern and unsmiling, a stark contrast to the strained and awkward grin on the signs of his opponent, Angela Merkel of the Christian Democrats (CDU). But tonight, as Schröder approaches, forcing me back against a small table that topples over, he is a massive swirl of backslaps, belly laughs, and smiles. One would never know that he just lost an election.

Schröder's election night show of confidence—a last-ditch effort to hold onto the chancellorship that seems almost certain to fail—was a fitting bookend to a campaign that he started last spring with a similar act of bravado. In May, Merkel's CDU took control of the state of North Rhine–Westphalia, a SPD stronghold for 39 years. The CDU's sudden strength left Schröder shaken. Rather than waiting for the national elections scheduled for 2006, he called for an early vote, betting he could catch his CDU opponents divided and unprepared. In many ways, he was right. The divisions within the CDU are a major reason for Merkel's ineffective campaign. Once ahead by almost 20 points and confident of a sweeping victory, Merkel lost her lead over the previous month. But, in the end, Schröder failed to win a plurality and threw the German electoral system into chaos. Many German analysts shake their head at his tactics. They have a word for the brand of brash and narcissistic politics that has led the country to electoral gridlock: American.

Sunday night in Berlin was like November 7, 2000, in Nashville or Austin. What was supposed to be the end of a grueling campaign turned out to be the beginning of a new one. The CDU ended the evening with 35 percent of the vote to the SPD's 34 percent. Merkel's coalition partners on the right, the Free Democrats (FDP), won a surprisingly strong 10 percent, but not enough to form a right-of-center coalition that would make

*Ryan Lizza is visiting Germany through the generosity of the Atlantik-Brücke.*

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Merkel chancellor and provide a mandate for the economic reforms she championed during the campaign.

The new campaign in Germany, a scramble between five parties to cobble together a majority coalition, is Byzantine and the outcome difficult to predict. But it's not hard to explain how Schröder forced a near electoral draw. He did it by Americanizing German politics. "The guy who campaigned against the United States," says Roland Werner, the spokesman for the libertarian-oriented Free Democrats, "has become more American than any other politician in Germany."

First, since both his party and his platform were unpopular, Schröder personalized the race. "People may not like his plan and may not like his policies, but they like him," noted a senior American diplomat stationed in Frankfurt. American-style attack ads and celebrity political consultants haven't yet taken root, but German reporters and politicians gripe that Schröder has helped make campaigns more superficial and media-centric. Merkel's hair and makeup were briefly an issue. Sweat stains on her dress were discussed on chat shows. The turning point of the campaign was a one-on-one TV debate between Merkel and Schröder. Most often, an incumbent ducks such forums, but Schröder approached it with relish. Merkel, a scientist from the east, looked uncertain, while Schröder seemed commanding. "He wasn't necessarily the intellectual winner, but he exuded confidence and charisma," says Rafael Seligmann, the editor-in-chief of *The Atlantic Times*, an English-language newspaper published in Germany.

Aside from her less-than-polished media persona, Merkel made fundamental campaign mistakes that Schröder masterfully exploited. Walter Mondale–style, she tried to make a virtue of a platform that demanded sacrifice from Germans. "This is not a very enthusiastic campaign," said one top party official. "Our message is that nobody likes to visit the doctor but, when you know it is necessary to go, you have to do it." Merkel offered bitter medicine: a raise in Germany's value-added tax. It was also an odd theme for the conservative CDU. "For seven years, they have been in the opposition talking about cutting taxes, and then their platform gets reduced to a tax increase," says the FDP's Werner, shaking his head in frustration.

Merkel's message got even more confusing when she named Paul Kirchhof, an academic and a vigorous proponent of a flat tax, as her future finance minister. Overnight, she went from a tax-raiser to an anti-tax radical. Schröder hammered away at Kirchhof, turning him into a symbol of CDU radicalism. When Merkel tried to distance herself from her own adviser, she only reinforced a sense of weakness and vacillation, and Schröder's attacks steadily chipped away at her double-digit lead. " Schröder is the best campaigner in Europe," says Roland Koch, the CDU governor of the state of Hesse and one of Merkel's chief party rivals.

Despite protestations from many German political observers that Merkel's status as a professional woman without children was irrelevant, gender stereotypes did play a role in the campaign, and Merkel's gaffes did little to help her overcome them. Reporters joked about "Merkel's girls' camp," a dismissive term for her circle of female advisers. Some of the senior male officials in the CDU resent Merkel's speedy rise through the party, and they conspicuously sat on their hands during the campaign. At the FDP's election night party, Margarita Mathiopoulos, the party's foreign policy adviser, was apoplectic. "They tried to prohibit a woman from being chancellor, and they didn't campaign for her," she said of Merkel's male colleagues in the CDU. "That's why I'm really upset. This is a lesson for Hillary Clinton if she wants to run for president. Watch out! Merkel was killed by her own party."

Now, as a weakened Merkel struggles to form a government, much of the political gossip in Berlin centers on which CDU members might stage a political coup against her. The leading contenders are Koch, a young, polished, pro-American politician; Edmund Stoiber, the Bavarian governor who narrowly lost to Schröder in 2002; and Christian Wulff, the leader of the state of Lower Saxony.

THE QUESTION FOR them may be whether it is even a job worth having at the moment. One likely coalition scenario is that Merkel, or perhaps her CDU replacement, will create a so-called grand coalition with the SPD. But the prospects for progress under such an arrangement is slim.

On the day after the election, CDU members in Berlin seemed to be moving away from the idea of a grand coalition with the SPD and toward what is referred to as the Jamaica coalition, named for the colors of that country's flag. The CDU, whose color is black, and the FDP, whose color is yellow, want to find a way to bring aboard the Greens, the party that has ruled in coalition with Schröder since 1998.

Such a coalition sounds incomprehensible to American observers, but there is more consensus in German politics than its five political parties suggest. On foreign policy, for instance, all parties are against the Iraq war and in favor of the Kyoto Treaty and the International Criminal Court, three of the major issues that have split Germany from the United States in recent years. On domestic issues, the debate is over how and whether to trim the large welfare state but not whether it should exist. Analysts here argue that the Greens, who have learned to enjoy being in power over the last seven years, might be bought off if the CDU were to modify its pro–nuclear energy stance and perhaps softened its opposition to EU membership for Turkey.

Other exotic coalitions are also being discussed, and nobody here really seems to know what the next government will look like or who will lead it. In the meantime, all the major issues that Germans were steeling themselves for—Turkey's integration into Europe, Iran's nuclear program, relations with the United States, the German economy—still loom. Schröder hoped his audacious political gamble would lead to a new mandate. Instead, the election was bad for Schröder, bad for Merkel, and bad for Germany. ■

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THE DISH WAS SERVED AT DINNER.

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The online bios of Iraq's "martyrs."

# Suicidology

BY HUSAIN HAQQANI AND DANIEL KIMMAGE

In 2003, a 26-year-old Moroccan who called himself Abu Osama Al Maghribi took the proceeds from the restaurant he owned with his father in Tangier and went to Baghdad. There, Al Maghribi, who named his own son Osama in honor of Osama bin Laden, turned a car purchased with his restaurant money and the sale of a plot of land he owned into a weapon of jihad. A friend who accompanied him describes what happened: "Abu Osama came back and got his bride—his car—and flew ahead of me. I was behind him, in my car. There was a lot of traffic, and he started to maneuver between the cars as though he were on a race track going for first place. I couldn't keep up. My strength flagged, I stopped the car, and I cried. I saw him pulling away from me and drawing nearer to his target. His heart grew still to tear out the criminal hearts. He will be blessed, and the criminals will face hardship; he will rise, and they will fall. I saw a column of smoke rise 20 meters into the sky amid a deafening roar. He felled 50 infidels."

This account comes from "The Martyrs of the Land of the Two Rivers," a collection of 430 biographies of insurgents who are connected by conviction, if not organization, to a global jihad symbolized by Al Qaeda. As suicide bombings—not to be confused with other insurgent groups like Sunni Baathists—continue to rock Iraq on an almost daily basis (including a dozen that took place on a single day, September 14), these biographies provide the most extensive account thus far of how these jihadists see their mission. Posted on the Internet in May by "Muhib Al Jihad" ("the lover of jihad") as three separate file attachments on an Arabic discussion forum, the compendium is a virtual recruitment poster. It chronicles the jihadists' exploits with the intention of inspiring others to "set off for the gardens." The biographies of the "martyrs" who have already done so inhabit a murky realm between fact and fantasy. But, even if the accounts paint a picture of their movement not as it is, but as its supporters would like it to be, it still speaks volumes about what motivates the jihadists—and, more importantly, what doesn't.

Technically speaking, the "The Martyrs of the Land of the Two Rivers" is a pastiche—snippets from Arab newspapers, postings to Internet forums, the transcribed texts of "wills" videotaped before suicide attacks, and occasional quotes from prominent jihadists like Abu Musab Al Zarqawi. The factual material presented paints an interesting demographic picture of the global jihadists in Iraq. For example, of the fighters expressly identified by country of origin, 175 are Saudi, 50 are Syrian, 28 are Iraqi, 15 are Kuwaiti, 13 are Jordanian, and a handful are from other Arab countries, including a few young men who had lived in France, Denmark, and Spain.

Many of the jihadists profiled held good jobs or were well-educated. Faysal Zayd Al Mutayri of Kuwait "resigned from the Ministry of Defense, where he held a military post." Sultan Al Hudhayl Al Qahtani owned restaurants in Riyadh. Fahd Abdallah Al Fayzi was from a rich Saudi family, his father a local real-estate tycoon. Tariq Bin Luwayfi Al Huwayti graduated from the meteorology faculty of King Abd Al Aziz University. Mahir Ali Al Jahni of Saudi Arabia studied in India, where he earned a degree in English and computer science. And Ahmad Said Ahmad Al Ghamidi, also of Saudi Arabia, was studying medicine at Khartoum University when he broke off his studies and used his tuition money to go to Iraq.

The point is not that foreign jihadists in Iraq are rich and well-educated, though some of them may be. Rather, the biographies stress wealth and good prospects as examples of what jihadists give up when they decide to join the jihad. They are men who either had, or could have had, the good things of this world, yet chose to forsake them in favor of the greater pleasures of paradise, the texts insist. Indeed, the biographies of the Iraqi jihadists contain many elements of the mythic cult of martyrdom that researchers have found elsewhere, most notably among Palestinian militants. As his final act draws near, the martyr sees visions of himself in paradise, and he dreams of the beautiful, black-eyed virgins who await him there.

But, before the martyr can reach paradise, before he can even kill himself, he must make it to Iraq, and, to do that, he must leave home. On this issue, the biographies elucidate an oddity of the many ideological and motivational texts that have come together in what is now a considerable body of jihadist literature. The vast majority of the martyrs are young men raised in a conservative society that emphasizes obedience to one's parents. Yet the "Martyrs of the Land of the Two Rivers" stresses that they need not ask their parents' permission before departing for the battlefield. Many jihad hopefuls, it is clear, must slink away from home because they know their parents would not approve. This indicates that Muslim families and societies are not as accepting of their young ones joining jihad as many believe.

One method "The Martyrs" recommends to recruits for explaining their journey is "the pious fib." Muqrin Majid Shib Al Utaybi of Saudi Arabia told his parents he was going to perform the lesser pilgrimage (the pilgrimage to

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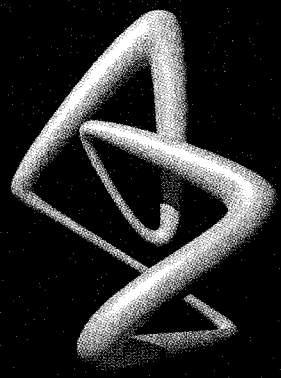
**What does this stand for?**



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Mecca that one can perform at any time of year) when he left for Iraq. Others said they were leaving to seek work, or simply left without saying anything. When parents approve, "The Martyrs" stresses it. It frequently speaks of parents joyfully handing out sweets to well-wishers when they learn, usually through an anonymous phone call from Iraq, that their son has become a martyr. Several biographies even provide phone numbers to contact and congratulate the martyr's family. In one extreme case, a Lebanese man who had lived in Denmark brought his 15-year-old son to Iraq, where both perished "in a clash with an Apache helicopter on a dark night."

As this dramatic language—pervasive in many accounts in "The Martyrs"—suggests, jihad is about more than ideology. Most recruits are young men, and, while they may crave paradise and its pleasures, they also want some excitement on earth. Here is the death of Iraqi Abu Muthanna Al Ansar: "He went out barefoot, pulling up his belt. He saw some infantrymen, shot at them, and hit around two. He had seen in a dream earlier that he was killing Americans and then was martyred. God was true to him and he true to God. A plane approached spewing death. He challenged it with a bazooka. He fired and missed. It fired and opened with its missiles the gateway to the garden. The two units did battle. About 15 unbelievers were killed." In another story, a suicide attack provides an opportunity for macabre, tough-guy humor. Abu Qutaybah, an Iraqi from Al Ramadi, "put on an explosive belt in Nazzal and went up to [American] soldiers ... reserved tickets to hell for them and hand-delivered them with his sacrifice."

WHILE THE BIOGRAPHIES offer up rich material, what they leave out is even more telling. Accounts by journalists and Western analysts often focus on insurgent organizations and leaders, yet the biographies are thin on such details. Zarqawi and his variously named groups make the occasional appearance. Abu Anas Al Shami, a top Zarqawi lieutenant who was killed in a U.S. air strike in Baghdad in September 2004, receives lavish treatment. But most of the stories are simple and operationally vague—"came to Iraq and was killed," sometimes in a suicide attack, but often by U.S. bombs.

Some of the reticence is surely due to a reluctance to reveal the jihadists' secrets, but much of it seems to stem from a lack of strategic vision. As the biographies tell it, the jihad works primarily through small groups and almost entirely at the level of the individual operation. The one "great battle" that runs through many texts is the fight for Falluja, where dozens of jihadists died. Falluja, however, was a defensive operation that the jihadists fought house to house. The offensive strategy and tactics belonged to U.S. forces. Then again, long-term strategic planning is something of a problem when the soldiers headed into battle hope to die. The texts dwell on the longing for martyrdom, with some would-be martyrs even worrying that God may not love them when they survive a battle. But they never address the difficulties this might pose for their campaign.

Indeed, their campaign, such as it is, seems to consist of fomenting terrorism until, by some stroke of divine luck, the infidel Americans just get up and leave Iraq. As a model, Salafi theorists usually invoke the Afghan jihad—which they believe not only drove out the Soviets, but also brought down the Soviet Union. For all its leaps of logic, it is at least a theory. But the biographies do not even go that far, preferring to claim a victory with each individual ascent to the garden.

Also missing are some of the issues most commonly cited as driving anti-Americanism in the Arab world. The Israeli-Palestinian conflict barely registers on the jihadist radar, and Abu Ghraib merits few mentions. The motivation for jihad is almost always, in keeping with Salafi ideology, the plight of the humiliated Muslim nation, victimized by the joint evil forces of *kufr* (unbelief, embodied by the United States as the enemy bent on the destruction of Islam) and *tawaghit* (tyrants who have set themselves up, or are propped up, as gods on earth).

Another curious omission is the general avoidance of the Sunni-Shia divide in Iraq. The majority of Iraqis are Shia, while the jihadists are militant Sunnis. Salafi ideology, in particular, savages Shia as heretics. Some biographies contain anti-Shia rhetoric, but mainly as asides. And, while some of the most devastating suicide attacks in Iraq have specifically targeted Shia, the global jihadists' exploits focus on American and other coalition troops, foreigners in general, and "collaborators" like the Iraqi police. If the jihadist planners hope to incite Sunni-Shia strife, as some of their actions suggest, it is not a strategy their supporters feel comfortable articulating.

They are even less comfortable articulating the fact that the vast majority of victims in suicide bombings are ordinary Iraqis. Take the description of Walid Al Asmar Al Shammari's death: "Walid Al Asmar Al Shammari was martyred in Iraq on 14 June, 2004. ... His family received condolences in Hail, northern Saudi Arabia, after they got a call from Iraq confirming his death when he carried out an operation with a car bomb. He drove it into a crowded area in central Baghdad last Tuesday. In addition to Al Shammari, the operation killed 16 people, including two Britons, a Frenchman, and an American." The other twelve were Iraqis but were not identified as such, a telling omission.

That omission suggests a critical weakness in the jihadist movement and its recruitment efforts. Imagine how the biography of the "hero" Al Shammari would read if it were juxtaposed with the biographies of the people he killed? What might readers in Saudi Arabia, Syria, and elsewhere in the Arab world make of a companion volume to "The Martyrs" in which each suicide bomber faced his victims, not as statistics in a war against the infidels, but as individuals in their own right? No such expanded edition is likely forthcoming from Muhib Al Jihad and his ilk. Perhaps it's a job for those fighting them. ■

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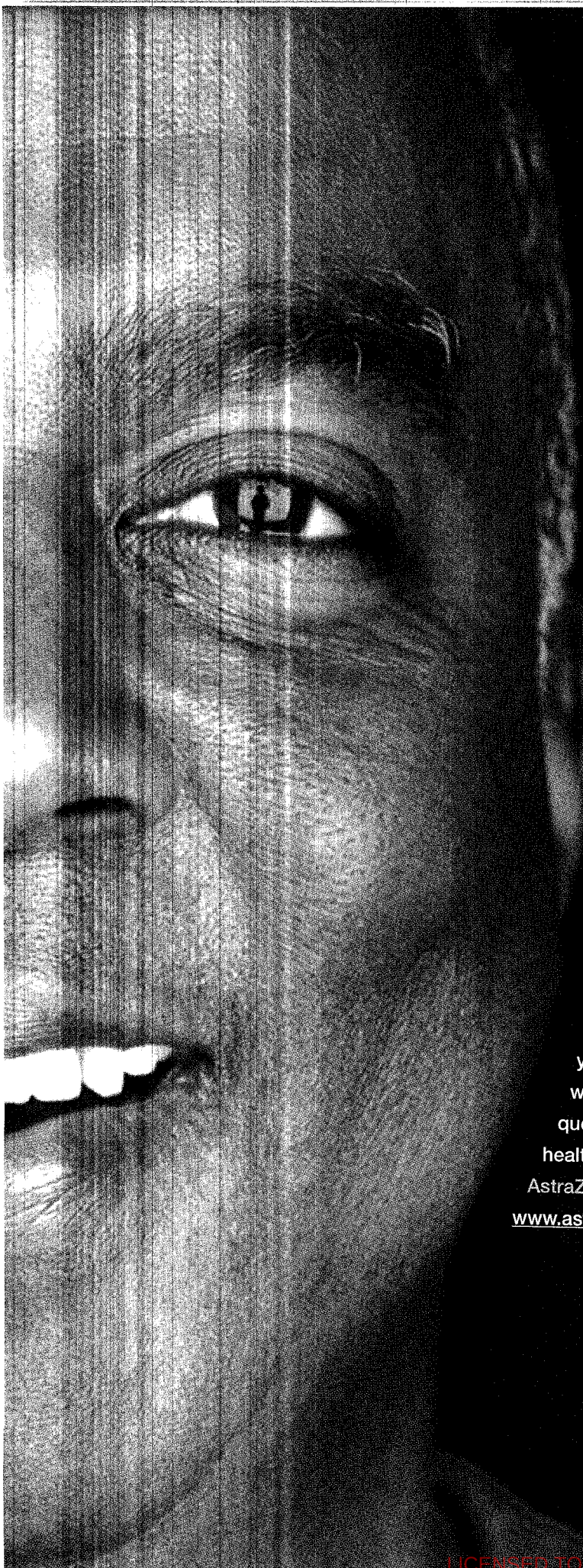

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## Ground Zero in the Big Easy.

# Building Model

BY CLAY RISEN

LESS THAN A week after September 11, 2001, *The Wall Street Journal*'s venerable architecture critic, Ada Louise Huxtable, penned a presciently pessimistic essay about the fate of Ground Zero. "Rebuilding on this site requires serious consideration," she wrote. "And yet ... if the usual scenario is followed, the debate will lead to a 'solution' in which principle is lost and an epic opportunity squandered." And this is precisely what has happened: The Port Authority (PA), which owns the land, and Larry Silverstein, who holds the lease, paid lip service to civic groups that demanded less office space and more housing and cultural facilities. But, in the end—despite the enormous slack in downtown Manhattan commercial real estate—they are rebuilding roughly the same square footage as in the original World Trade Center. And they got away with it simply because, as Huxtable predicted, rational city planning gave way to "movers and shakers making big building plans under the expedient banner of physical and symbolic reconstruction."

Exactly four years after Huxtable wrote her essay, the issue of massive urban reconstruction has reemerged, this time in New Orleans. And so the question naturally arises: How can New Orleans learn from New York?

### LESSON ONE: LOCAL VOICES, LOCAL CONTROL

Part of the reason New York never rationally planned its rebuilding is that New York City itself had little say in the process. In the days after the attacks, local officials failed to take the lead on long-term planning; so in stepped New York Governor George Pataki, the PA, and Silverstein, who controlled the site before September 11. Because the PA is an unelected bureaucracy and Silverstein is a private citizen, this significantly reduced the chances for broad public input. The state did eventually create the Lower Manhattan Development Corporation (LMDC) and tasked it with, among other things, incorporating ideas from civic groups and private citizens. But "it did not have enough power," says New York architect Margaret Helfand, founder of New York New Visions, a consortium of architects and planners. "It seemed like an advisory committee to Pataki."

As a result, civic groups thought they were being heard, only to grow frustrated when it became clear the LMDC had only a limited say in the process. This left little room for a broad discussion of imaginative rebuilding possibilities. One idea that received significant attention among civic leaders would have buried West Street (which runs along the western edge of Ground Zero) and erected office towers above it, thereby relieving the pressure to build on the site itself. But it never received serious consideration. Even City Hall couldn't get its voice heard. In summer 2002, it offered to buy out the PA's Ground Zero stake by swapping it for the land under LaGuardia and Kennedy airports, currently owned by the city. But, because there was no way to force the PA to consider the deal, the proposal withered. "It was a closed process, with officials meeting behind closed doors, which made a charade of public consultation," says Michael Sorkin, director of the urban design program at the City College of New York.

Avoiding this in New Orleans would mean setting up an LMDC-like body under the mayor's office, with exclusive decision-making powers but also an enforceable mandate to incorporate community input. This includes ward representatives, church leaders, urban-design experts, nonprofits, and homeless advocates as well as the public at large. Under Washington, D.C., Mayor Anthony Williams, the city's planning department convenes neighborhood meetings to discuss progress on its current projects and collect public input; these comments are then used to fine-tune the department's plans. Why couldn't a similar idea, though on a much larger scale, work in New Orleans?

### LESSON TWO: TAKE THE TIME TO PLAN

As Huxtable foresaw, Pataki and Silverstein failed to consider a variety of rebuilding strategies and instead pushed through a plan geared more toward meeting immediate political and financial goals than the long-term needs of the city. Claiming the obligation to rebuild as quickly as possible, the two resisted calls by civic leaders to put together a master plan. Instead, what they (and the press) commonly referred to as Daniel Libeskind's "master plan" was anything but—it was little more than a vague outline of one possible vision. It failed to take into account how changing demographic patterns or economic development (in recent decades, financial firms have been moving further uptown or across the Hudson to New Jersey) would affect Lower Manhattan and how the site would fit within it. It also lacked the sort of nuts-and-bolts schematics—precise guidelines for things like sidewalks and public spaces—to which the public could later hold the developers.

Of course, even in an ideal political climate, New Orleans and the Gulf region hardly have the time to consider thoroughly all the alternatives. Nevertheless, there are serious questions that have to be answered. Should the Ninth Ward be reopened, or should it be razed for parkland, with its residents relocated on higher ground across the river? What sort of public transit system should be in place for them? To what extent should the rebuilding incorporate environmentally friendly design principles, such as neighborhood recycling and bicycle paths? As early as possible, local and regional architects, urban planners, and government officials should convene design conferences to answer just these sorts of questions. It's about "establishing a consensus vision," says Ernest Hutton, a New York architect and co-

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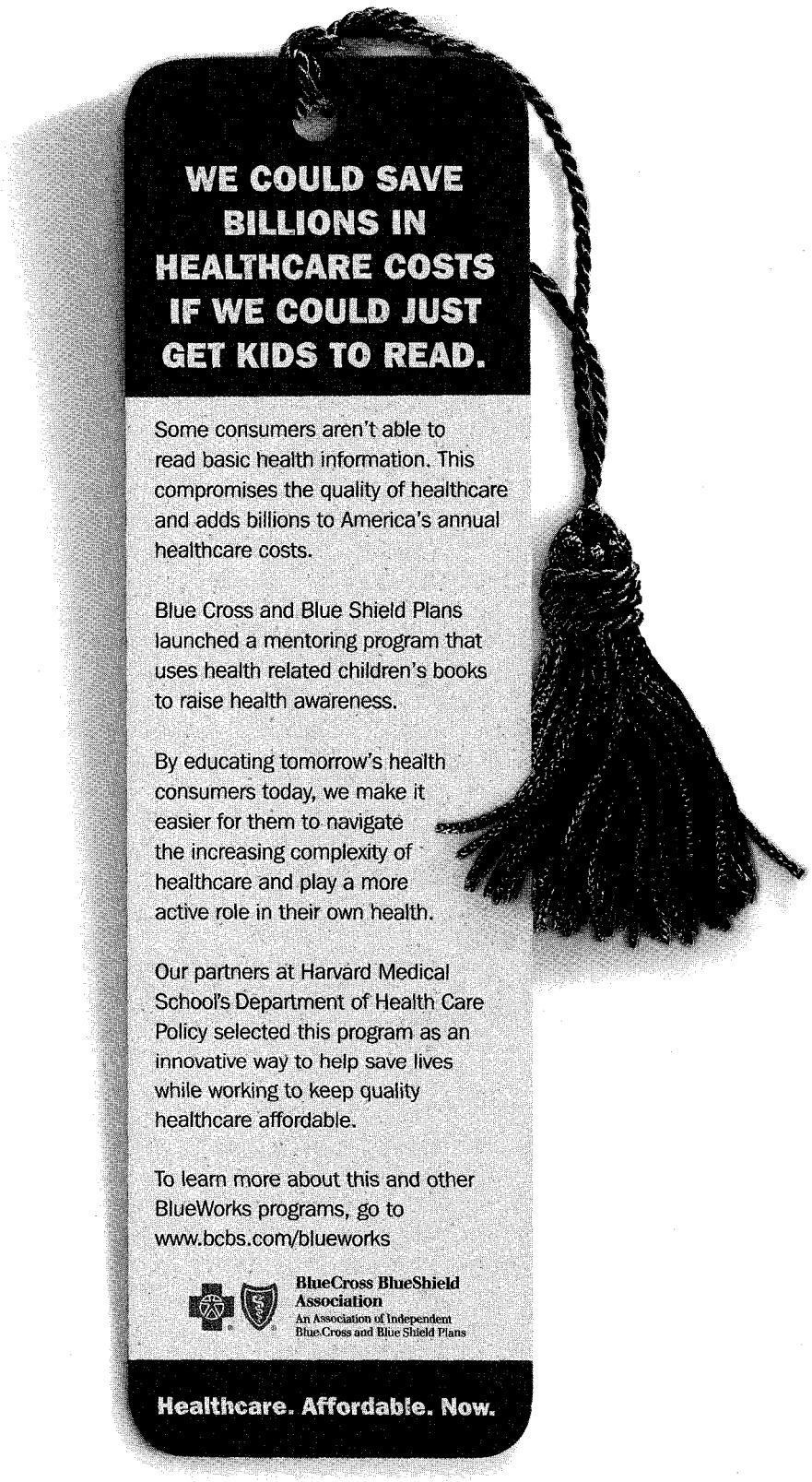
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chair of New York New Visions. "The biggest problem for New Orleans is going to be balancing the need for speed with the necessity for doing it right."

### Lesson Three: Think Better, Think Regionally

One of the things New York did right was to look beyond the immediate site to the region as a whole, particularly in planning how the site could be improved from the original World Trade Center. Lower Manhattan has steadily lost tenants to Midtown, in part because it is relatively cut off from regional transportation networks. While the Libeskind plan failed to address other aspects of future economic development, the city and state government did manage to wrangle $4.55 billion in federal funds for a new transportation center downtown, and they are looking for ways to fund a downtown link to the Long Island Rail Road and a rail connection to Kennedy Airport.

In New Orleans, rebuilding authorities should consider the city as part of a regional economy and figure out ways that New Orleans can complement, rather than simply compete with, cities like Houston and Atlanta. Given the importance of seaborne trade to coastal Texas, Louisiana, and Mississippi, one idea might be to create a tristate port authority to coordinate the growth of regional shipping capacity. "You can't focus on New Orleans alone," says Bob Yaro, president of the New York–based Regional Plan Association. "You have to have an economic development strategy that looks at the whole megaregion, which stretches from Houston to Pensacola."

But, for all the potential for grand schemes, planners need to realize that the best plans are often those that look the least impressive on paper. Historically, proposals to radically rebuild cities have failed. At the same time, in the wake of disaster, it is all too common for business interests to promote narrow-minded, profit-driven projects by disguising them as blueprints for rejuvenation. That has been the outcome in New York, where Silverstein's promises to rebuild Ground Zero bigger and better have slowly eroded, exposing his real goal: recuperating his lost office space. In New Orleans, the business community is already imagining the future city as a lucrative cultural artifact—Venice on the bayou. "I think of New Orleans sort of like Venice, which has a real water problem yet is a national treasure in Italy," Pres Kabacoff, CEO of New Orleans–based real estate firm HRI Properties, told *BusinessWeek Online*. Avoiding such "Disney-fication" requires strong leadership that ensures public funds are spent on the core issues of reconstruction, such as housing and utilities.

Done correctly, the rebuilding of New Orleans can create a sustainable, equitable city. Given the scope of the rebuilding and the money to be invested, New Orleans is clearly not New York. But, if the Big Easy doesn't learn from the Big Apple, it will end up making the same mistakes. ■

Republicans learn their dirty tricks by practicing on one another.

# Swimming with Sharks

BY FRANKLIN FOER

Everyone who watched this summer's race for College Republican National Committee (CRNC) chair with any detachment has a favorite moment of chutzpah they admire in spite of themselves. Leading the count are the following: speaking sotto voce of your opponent's "homosexuality"; rigging the delegate count so that states that support your candidate have twice as many votes as those that don't; and using a sitting congressman to threaten the careers of undecided voters. I can understand the perverse appeal of each of these incidents. But I cast my vote for the forged letter.

The letter arrived via fax to the Crystal Gateway Marriott in Arlington, Virginia, on the eve of the CRNC convention in June. The three-day convention is attended by student delegates from across the country who, after enduring a four-month campaign filled with importuning, backstabbing, and horsetrading, vote for a chair. Most campaigns culminate with the handpicked establishment candidate inheriting the two-year, $75,000-a-year position without much of a fight. But, this year, the establishment candidate, Paul Gourley—the handpicked successor of the last chairman, who was the handpicked successor of the chairman before him—faced a vigorous challenge from an insurgent, Michael Davidson, a smooth-talking 25-year-old Berkeley grad.

Since the fax appeared unexpectedly in the final days of the race, it created an unmitigated frenzy among the conventioneers. The letter announced that the chairman of the Missouri delegation had completely replaced his state's official slate of delegates (who all happened to support Davidson). I followed one Missouri delegate, Justin Smith, a slight, fair-skinned student in a gray suit, to a Davidson luncheon with an open-bar, swag-filled gift baskets, and a Tex-Mex spread.

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He seemed panicked. "I don't know what's going on."

What was going on was that a new Missouri delegation, quietly flown to the convention, had arrived in Arlington and pledged its allegiance to Gourley. Stunned by this turn of events, the Davidson camp scrambled to reach the apparently turncoat chairman, Will Dreiling. But Dreiling had unaccountably vanished—a disappearance that Davidson supporters jokingly attributed to Gourley's powerful backers in Missouri, including a state assemblyman and a gubernatorial aide, both of whom everyone knew had been pressuring the young Missouri chair to switch candidates. On the final decisive day of the convention, hours before the vote, Davidson's people finally tracked down Dreiling. It turned out that he had been under so much pressure to support Gourley that he had resigned his post and taken a family vacation in Nebraska. What's more, Dreiling protested he hadn't written the letter. "It was forged," Davidson's campaign manager, Robb McFadden, told me. In an attempt to reinstall his supporters, Davidson took a cell phone, with Dreiling on the line, from delegate to delegate, exposing the letter as fake. "Eventually, the Gourley people didn't have a defense," said McFadden. "They backed off the letter."

Such controversy is the stuff of the organization's rich folklore. Typically, these confabs pull in a cast of characters that extends beyond a bunch of hormonally charged undergrads. Behind the scenes, in the campaign war rooms, small armies of veteran Republican operatives and congressional staffers toil. That's because there's much more at stake in the elections than a swish post-college gig. After campaign finance reform, the College Republicans reinvented themselves as a big-time 527—a group legally allowed to spend an infinite amount of its own money on campaigns—with a budget of over $17 million. They have a massive network of operatives to send into the field to bolster candidates, and they have patronage to spread among friends and through direct-mail firms. In other words, it's well worth tearing a Shermanesque path to the sea to control College Republicans, no matter the carnage—and no matter the expense. Michael Davidson said he spent an estimated $200,000—raised off high-rollers who normally sign checks to senators and presidential wannabes—trying to claim the grand prize.

But the significance of the CRNC goes beyond that. The Committee is the place where Republican strategists learn their craft and acquire their knack for making their Democratic opponents look like disorganized children. Many of the biggest-brand Republican operatives—from Karl Rove and Lee Atwater, to Charlie Black and Roger Stone, to Jack Abramoff, Ralph Reed, and Grover Norquist—got their starts this way. Walking through the halls of the convention, it is easy to see the genesis of tactics deployed in the Florida recount and by the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth. Republicans learn how to fight hard against Democrats by practicing on one another first. "There are no rules in a knife fight," Norquist instructed the young conventioneers in a speech. And, while Norquist described a knife fight, the Gourley-Davidson rumble transpired around him.

"THEY CALL THIS race 'hick versus slick,'" Paul Gourley intoned, making the case for himself in a candidate debate at the end of the convention's long first day. Gourley, whose tuxedo fit snugly over his 23-year-old corn-fed frame, had just arrived from the College Republicans' Lee Atwater Gala dinner. He grasped the podium, smiled broadly, and bellowed in his flat South Dakota voice, "I'm proud to be the hick."

Modern-day Republicans of all ages have perfected the art of wrapping themselves in populist just-folks garb, even if they actually have a black tie around their neck. And, despite Gourley's yokel protestations, he represented the old money in the race. After serving a stint as treasurer of College Republicans and traveling the country to recruit field organizers, Gourley received the blessing of the outgoing chairman, Eric Hoplin. But, in reality, he had won the blessing of a force more powerful than a single politician. He had won the blessing of an entity that College Republicans speak of in hushed tones and that they compare to the Empire in *Star Wars*—the Establishment.

When College Republicans invoke the Establishment, they mean a clique of former College Republicans—now grown-ups playing politics at the highest level—who will trample anyone to maintain their clique's control of the organization. Like all good cabals, it is hard to know exactly who belongs to the Establishment and how Machiavellian their meddling is. Before his tumble from grace, the lobbyist Jack Abramoff would lend College Republicans his skybox at the MCI center, donate money, and lead training sessions. (In 2002, the CRNC paid Jack Abramoff for "accounting & legal services.") Rove reportedly keeps tabs, and Norquist invites the group's chair to attend his celebrated Wednesday gathering of conservative big shots. But the convention offered some more suggestive examples of the Establishment's methodology. Just past 2 a.m. on Saturday, wavering delegates from Louisiana received calls from Morton Blackwell, the legendary veteran of the Goldwater and Reagan campaigns, urging them to vote for Gourley. It was a perfectly calibrated tactic. "A 19-year-old Republican will generally do whatever a demigod of the conservative movement like Morton tells them," one Davidson supporter griped.

And they are even more likely to respond to entreaties from a congressman. Patrick McHenry, a dough-faced 29-year-old freshman representative from North Carolina and former CRNC treasurer, went to war on Gourley's behalf. "I got a call. They said, 'The congressman is on the line,'" University of North Carolina junior Jordan Selleck told me. "He basically said that we'd be screwed if we didn't switch to Gourley. Our careers in politics would be over." As Jennifer Holder, who served as a state chair in the '90s, lamented, "There are a lot of sharks infesting the kiddie pool."

With sharks like McHenry menacing the delegates, Gourley largely kept to the shadows, leaving the glad-handing and button-holing to others. But all the Establishment's lobbying and cajoling didn't make the race any less

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tight. While Gourley risked losing a plum job and a network any budding politician would envy, the Establishment had far more at stake. In part, these veterans are like pathetic frat brothers returning to their old house for a few more keg stands, a biannual chance to hang with 19-year-olds and relive their youth. But involvement in College Republicans offers tangible perks for them, too. It provides a vehicle for recruiting protégés. Rove, for instance, has stocked his White House office with CRs. And, by helping the youngsters win CRNC elections, the adults earn a chit they can cash in during election season. As McHenry's story illustrates, it's not an exaggeration to say that the College Republicans can tip races. The group flooded McHenry's district with manpower last year, as he competed in a tight primary race. In the end, he prevailed by 85 votes.

WHILE GOURLEY WORKED the back rooms, Davidson could hardly be avoided. From the beginning, he worked the halls of the hotel, shaking hands and huddling with potential supporters. Silver-tongued and surfer-boy handsome, with mussy brown hair, Davidson was indeed slick.

But Davidson wasn't just a charismatic interloper. He had raised cash for his campaign with Phil Gramm–like acumen. According to his aides, high rollers in California invested in him because his sparkling fund-raising pitches convinced them of his limitless future in politics. As the *Los Angeles Times* put it in a breathless profile, "[O]ne question demands to be asked: Does he ever fantasize about running for president?"

Davidson's fund-raising, in turn, allowed him to dazzle delegates, just like the Establishment had done for so many years. To combat the Establishment's hardball tactics, and to press his own aggressive ones, he brought to the convention a cadre of adult advisers, including the p.r. consultant who helped prepare Paula Jones's testimony and two certified experts on parliamentary procedure. All were paid their standard fees. (They were in good company: To resolve disagreements between the campaigns over the credentialing of delegates, the CRNC hired a professional arbitrator, an auditing firm, and their own parliamentary consultant, who also co-edits *Roberts Rules of Order*.)

I first understood the sophistication of Davidson's operation when I visited his war room. Although the campaign had banned press from its inner sanctum, a scrawny bouncer stationed at the threshold couldn't contain his pride and allowed me a quick look around. Most congressional candidates, and even a few serious presidential ones, might be jealous of what I saw. The center of the room contained a bank of ten laptops arrayed around a large table. Another table held dozens of walkie-talkies with Secret Service–style earpieces. Copy machines and printers surrounded the perimeter. Students in jeans and shorts whirled about, barking into their Blackberry phones and pulling paper off the printers. As I took in the room, the bouncer asked, "Did you get what you need?"

You could see Davidson's largesse all over the convention. Delegates would wander into his hospitality room, which was wallpapered with plasma televisions. Lunch included an open bar and a vast spread. His workers handed out gift bags like the kind doled out at fancy Hamptons benefits or at the Sundance Film Festival, filled with cans of Red Bull and Starbucks gift cards. At night, they gathered in the same room for a 1980s Reagan Dance Party, replete with another open bar, DJ, and disco lights. I watched a lucky guy on the dance floor, sandwiched between blondes, waving a straw cowboy hat as he boogied to Duran Duran.

But, even with all his resources, Davidson had taken a major gamble. Challenging the Establishment guarantees that you will be subject to the politics of personal destruction. As McFadden told me, a whispering campaign alleged that Davidson was gay (not true) and moderate (quite possibly true) and from Red Berkeley (demonstrably true). Smears appeared on a blog called *CR Veterans for Truth*, a bow in the direction of the swift-boat veterans who attempted to shred John Kerry's military reputation. But the real destruction doesn't occur during the campaign—it comes afterward. A long trail of defeated insurgents have found their political careers ruined by the Establishment.

Back in 1981, Abramoff and his campaign manager, Norquist, promised their leading competitor, Amy Moritz, the job of CRNC executive director if she dropped out of the race. Moritz took the bait, but it turned out that Abramoff had made the promise with his fingers crossed. Norquist took the executive director job and named Moritz his deputy. That demotion didn't last long, either. After discovering the talented Ralph Reed, Norquist handed the Christian Coalition godfather Moritz's responsibilities and her office space. They placed all of Moritz's belongings in a box labeled AMY'S DESK. Even 25 years later, she hasn't shed her role as College Republican doormat. Abramoff used her think tank, the National Center for Public Policy Research, to funnel nearly $1 million into a phony direct-mail firm with an address identical to his own.

While College Republicans have a vague understanding of Abramoff's ascent, they all can recite the ballad of Rove and Atwater—the ultimate object lesson in how the Establishment strikes back. In 1973, Rove was the Establishment candidate, and Atwater, the original Sun Tsu–quoting College Republican, was his prime campaign operative. They spent the spring of 1973 crisscrossing the country in a Ford Pinto, lining up the support of state chairs—basically the right-wing version of Thelma and Louise. But, in point of fact, Rove was hardly the right-winger in the race. His two opponents, Terry Dolan and Robert Edgeworth, were. And, when Dolan threw his support to Edgeworth, Rove had no other alternative. He had to cheat.

When the College Republicans gathered for their convention at the Lake of the Ozarks resort in Missouri, Rove and Atwater relentlessly challenged the legitimacy of Edgeworth's delegates, even if the evidence did not justify their attacks. Because of Rove's allegations, the convention end-

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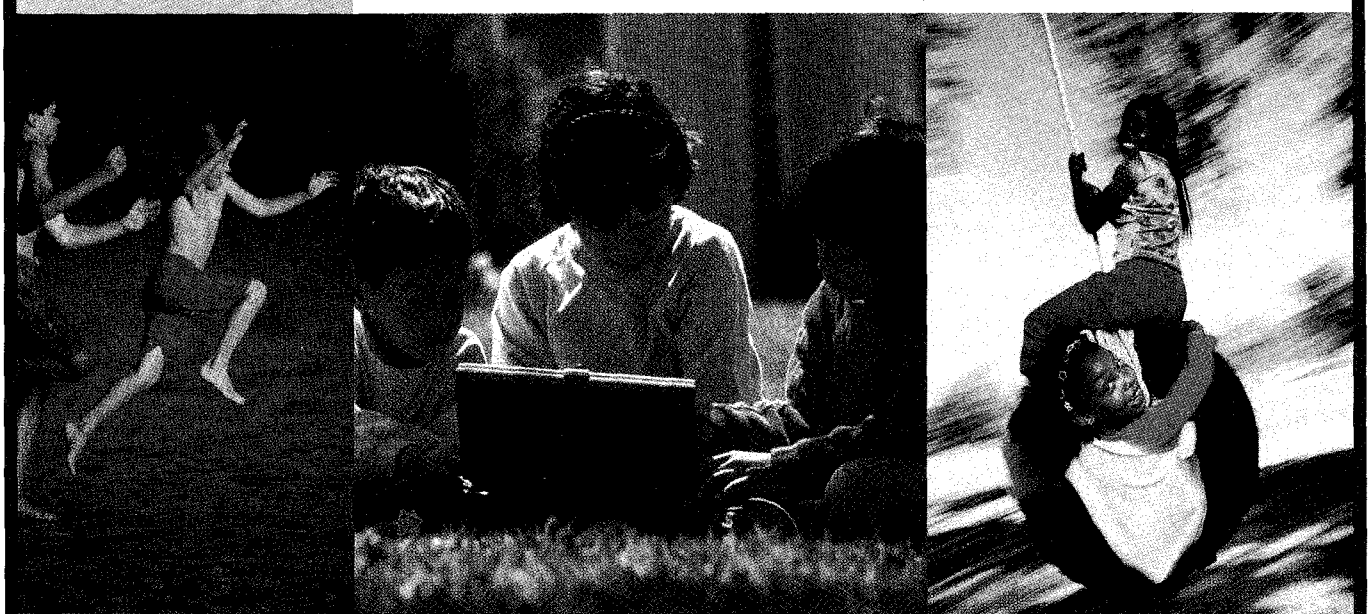

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ed in deadlock. In revenge, Dolan went to *The Washington Post* with recordings that captured training seminars where Rove boasted of his campaign techniques, including rooting through opponents' garbage cans and other forms of campaign espionage. The *Post* broke the story under the headline "GOP PROBES OFFICIAL AS TEACHER OF TRICKS." The Republican National Committee chairman, one George H.W. Bush, however, didn't punish Rove for his less-than-high-minded behavior. Instead, he gave Rove the chairmanship and sent Edgeworth a scathing letter accusing him of disloyalty. "He wrote me out of the party," Edgeworth told James Moore and Wayne Slater, the authors of the biography *Bush's Brain*.

In the years following the Rove victory, Edgeworth recreated himself as a Virgil scholar and took a post at Louisiana State University. He passed away last year. The story is retold as a cautionary tale: Mess with the Establishment, and you, too, will lead an obscure life, immersed in the study of a man who guided field trips to hell.

On Friday night, just before the big debate, something happened that made the Davidson camp believe that their man could finally reverse the tide of this history. A blonde from Virginia named Amber VerValin unexpectedly entered the war room and announced that the she could provide decisive evidence that the Gourley operation was cheating. Such evidence would not be difficult to supply, because she herself had committed the misdeed. As she confessed her sins, you could only hear the sheaf of collated flyers dropping off the copiers. One operative reached for the war room's video camera. They would tape her confession and then play it the next morning, just before the voting—a bombshell so powerful and deftly timed that perhaps not even Rove could defuse it.

A FEW HOURS later, as the two candidates prepared to debate, crowds formed outside the ballroom. Each candidate's contingent carried printed signs. EVERY COLLEGE REPUBLICAN COUNTS!, screamed the Davidson signs, a slogan with echoes of the Democratic pleas from the Florida recount of 2000. I watched as women in gowns stood in each other's faces, pumping their fists in the air, chanting their candidate's name. When the doors to the debate venue opened and the throngs flocked in, floor managers quickly directed their contingents into seats and began to quiet their crowds, so that they didn't create an impression of unruliness that might sway the few remaining swayable voters.

The Davidson camp managed the affair with the efficiency and attention to detail that had brought an upset victory within reach. Floor managers distributed press releases, both before and after the showdown, like rapid response at a presidential debate. The Davidson war room had acquired the cell phone numbers of every delegate to the convention. As the debate transpired, the war room sent continual text messages to each of the phones. But, for all the orchestration, they couldn't choreograph the reaction of their supporters. I sat at a table of Davidson supporters in the middle of the ballroom. This table had empty seats, I suspected, because it contained the most patently nerdy characters in the room, with the requisite oversized glasses and unwashed hair. They were an emotional bunch. When their candidate alluded to running an ethical administration, they began chanting an acronym, unintelligible to outsiders, but piquant to everyone in the room: "RDI, RDI, RDI!"

RDI, or Response Dynamics Inc., is the biggest scandal in the history of the College Republicans. More precisely, it is a direct-mail firm that brought the College Republicans approximately $9 million last year. Most of that money went straight back to RDI, which claimed $8.2 million to cover expenses and their fees, according to the *Los Angeles Times*.

How does one raise $9 million in a year for a group like College Republicans? For starters, it is important to obscure the ultimate destination of the funds. The College Republicans sent out their solicitations on the letterhead of such nonexistent groups as "Republican Headquarters 2004" and "Republican Elections Committee." Next, it helps to fill the missives with as much emotion as a Wagnerian opera. "Apparently the Democrats don't have any concern about hurting you, your family or America," one letter read. "Their sole concern is revenge—vengeance—retribution." The most infamous of these missives included an American flag lapel pin. It urged recipients to pray over the pin and return it, along with $1,000. According to the letter, the pin would be worn by the president as he accepted the Republican nomination: "I could have sent you your own lapel pin, but I knew that it wouldn't mean nearly as much to you as being able to give a special gift to President Bush during this challenging time." This letter, incidentally, bore the signature of Paul Gourley.

Finally, it helps to send these letters to senior citizens, who are lonely and sometimes suffering from dementia. "I don't have any more money," Cecilia Barbier, a 90-year-old retired church council worker and College Republicans contributor, told the *Seattle Times*. "I'm stopping giving to everybody. That was all my savings that they got." In a single year, Barbier made 300 donations for the organization, adding up to $100,000.

College Republicans had understood this game for years. They had heard many such stories from the children of elderly men and women who receive boxes full of these letters. And many chairmen of the organization sought to break the relationship with RDI. "Everyone called it heroin," says Holder. The CRs sincerely tried to kick their addiction, but they simply couldn't.

It took simultaneous stories in the *Seattle Times* and the Durham *Herald-Sun* last winter to finally break the contract's back. In the immediate aftermath of these stories, CRNC Chair Eric Hoplin e-mailed top state officials of the organization, telling them not to speak to the news media. "We need the story to go away, which it will," he wrote. "But

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only if we all withhold our comments." He added that the story was "full of lies and distortions written by a well-known liberal who is out to get us." But Hoplin's position wouldn't hold long. RDI represented a potent campaign issue and a growing embarrassment for the GOP. By March of this year, the CRNC had cut its relationship with the direct-mailers. The damage, however, had been done. By attempting to exploit the power of prayer with the lapel pin, Gourley had generated resentment among evangelical students who might have been otherwise wary of a candidate from Red Berkeley like Davidson. A delegate from Idaho told me, "As a Christian, I couldn't stomach that."

ON SATURDAY MORNING, the Davidson camp prepared to unveil the explosive Virginia scandal. It had the damning videotape of VerValin ready to play to the convention, a last minute surprise. In the tape, VerValin claimed that she had forged constitutions for 15 Virginia CR chapters to create the impression of a larger Virginia CR contingent. This had triggered a rule that automatically granted the state, which resided in the Gourley camp, additional delegates. To prove her bona fides, VerValin held the phony documents and then her own driver's license before the cameras. She had committed this act of deceit, she claimed, under pressure from her state chair.

But the Davidson operatives never got a chance to show the damning video. Parliamentary rules forbid showing a tape—a fact that Davidson's war room hadn't considered. Davidson had to describe the scandal, in all its confusing detail, on the convention floor. He demanded that the additional delegates, accrued on the basis of forgery, be denied. But it didn't help Davidson's case that the Gourley campaign's rebuttal accused him of engaging in "Jesse Jackson–like" tactics. When it came time to vote on the Virginia scandal, the Davidson camp anticipated a squeaker. And they knew that the vote would determine their candidate's fate. "If we lost this test vote, then all our soft support would disappear," McFadden told me. "They would realize that we were going to lose. It would be in their self-interest to align themselves with the winning side."

In the end, Davidson's motion to exclude the Virginians failed by a mere three votes. The difference, in the eyes of the Davidson camp, came down to a Judas by the name of Steve Damion, chairman of the New Jersey CRs. All along, even that morning, Damion had promised that his state would sit squarely behind the insurgent. But, when he swore his allegiance to Davidson, he didn't look his staffers in the eyes. That's because he had already purged Cassandra Cavanaugh, the Garden State's most enthusiastic Davidson supporter, from his slate of delegates.

The insurgents haven't let Damion's treachery rest. On their blogs, especially the cheeky *Truthcaucus.com*, Davidson supporters have skewered him as a liar and a crook. They had splashy material at the ready. Damion's betrayal coincided with a scandalous e-mail that he sent to an aide to New Jersey gubernatorial candidate Doug Forrester. After Forrester wrote asking for help from New Jersey College Republicans, Damion replied, "I would be more than happy to give that information to you and the Forrester Campaign, but I am looking at you to help us out as well. I mean the 100 dollars he [Forrester] gave to us is really drops in the bucket. I have local candidates for [state Assembly] that are cutting us checks for 250. See where I am coming from? If there is a 3,000 dollar check waiting for me, I am coming running and the campaign will have total access to our resources at all times, no problem." After the publication of his e-mail, Damion resigned his post.

There are many competing theories explaining why Damion joined Gourley at the eleventh hour. But, without him—and with the defeat on the Virginia question—the Davidson camp understood its fate. In fact, despite moments of optimism, Davidson supporters had long ago prepared themselves for it. "Beginning in May, we began to consider the option of walking out of the convention and starting our own organization," one Davidson aide says. They had even received promises of funding for an alternative organization that would compete with the Establishment.

Yet, faced with certain defeat, Davidson lost his nerve. "It was a human decision," says the aide. So many rosy predictions had been made about Davidson's future. He didn't want to gamble his career by crossing the Establishment and embarrassing the Republican Party. Unlike Robert Edgeworth, the classicist vanquished by Rove, he was only willing to take the fight so far. "There's something inside of me that still believes things need to be changed," Davidson told me last week. "But I'm inclined to be gracious and move on."

A few weeks after the convention, I got in touch with the newly reelected president of College Democrats, Grant Woodard of Grinnell College. For his uncontested race, he said he raised $2,000—$198,000 less than Michael Davidson's estimated take. Unlike the College Republicans, Democratic students are not organized as an independent 527. They reside within the Democratic National Committee and exist largely to supply campaign volunteers. Woodard makes all his calls after 9 p.m., "when I get free cell phone minutes," he told me. His salary is $75,000 lower than the one Chairman Paul Gourley receives—that is to say, nonexistent. The contrast between the two organizations is remarkably vivid. When the liberal Center for American Progress sent a blogger to the CRNC convention, she returned horrified by what she'd witnessed and sentimental about the Democratic operation: "I much prefer our movement with blue jeans, diversity, goofy kids, birkenstocks and good beer (none of that busch light crap). We've definitely gotta step up the field based organizing, but let's make sure we're enjoying it. And each other." Considering their current losing streak, Democrats might want to spend more time contemplating the contrast between the two styles of political education. How often do Birkenstocks trod the road to victory? Can you really count on goofy kids in a knife fight? ■

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# BOOKS & THE ARTS

## STANLEY KAUFFMANN ON FILMS

# Calls of the Wild

ROBERT REDFORD HAS HAD a recurrent theme in his career. Ever since *Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid* (1969), which was a Western, offbeat but still a Western, he has returned quite often to the theme of the West—not in anything like the conventional genre but in implicit praise of the region's majesty and its effect on character. *Jeremiah Johnson* (1972) was the best of Redford's paeans; *The Horse Whisperer* (1998) was weak. His latest, **AN UNFINISHED LIFE**, is even weaker.

**AN UNFINISHED LIFE**
(Miramax)

**GRIZZLY MAN**
(Lions Gate)

In these last two he has subverted his own intent. *The Horse Whisperer*, set in Montana, presented magnificent space and a man who lived up to what he thought was its spirit, and then Redford used them for a marshmallow story. In *An Unfinished Life*, it's Wyoming, equally magnificent, and once again Redford is an outdoorsy stalwart who lives up to his rugged environment, but once again, only more so, he has used the majesty of the place and the grit of his role for a story contrived by a latter-day culture that is small-scale and soft.

Redford, without even a farewell wave to the millions of women who have sighed over him for decades, now plays a grandfather, grizzled and whiskery. The screenplay, derived from the novel by Mark Spragg and Virginia Korus Spragg, is the sort of story that, once it has set its people in place, might as well quit. Very early on we know essentially what is going to happen, and we just have to wait around for it to come.

Redford is Einar, a rancher who has sold all his cattle except for a milch cow but still lives on his ranch. To his place come his daughter-in-law, Jean, and her eleven-year-old daughter, Griff. Einar's son, we learn, was killed a few years back in an auto accident for which Jean was responsible. She and her child, Einar's grandchild, moved away and are not welcome back, but he grudgingly takes them in. (Jean has just fled a boyfriend who beat her.) We do not need to wonder whether Einar's attitude will change, whether subsequent events will reveal Jean's good points and will stir up some love in him for his granddaughter. Why else would the picture have been made?

Morgan Freeman, who was the philosophical sidekick of a boxing manager in *Million Dollar Baby*, is now the philosophical sidekick of the rancher. He is also involved in some portentous symbolism. A year earlier he was badly mauled by a grizzly bear: Einar has to give him morphine shots and help him generally. The bear reappears, is captured by the sheriff and aides, and is caged. Einar, for murky reasons, tries to bring the bear from the cage to his own place; but the bear escapes, and instead of doing more mauling, heads back into the wilds. Some sort of theme is implied here, indecipherable. Possibly we are invited to supply any theme that strikes our fancy, but none struck mine.

The film, so far as it is betrayable, is betrayed by the casting of Jean. She is played by Jennifer Lopez, a sexy star who is out of key with the picture and is presumably on hand to supply the oomph that Redford no longer provides. The director is Lasse Hallström, the Swede who long ago made the unique and savory *My Life as a Dog* and who has had a moderately interesting career in this country—*The Cider House Rules*, for instance. Nothing in his work for Redford rises above the routine.

Redford himself is a curious contradiction. On screen he radiates intelligence, and he has always played roles that bask in that aura. (And he has done much offscreen that bespeaks intelligence—for prime instance, founding the Sundance Institute to help young film-makers.) But a depressing number of the screenplays that he has chosen are well-intended but dull-witted. The bracing air of the West has insufficiently cleared his mind. Yet (with a sigh) he is still enough of a figure for us to care about what he does further in his grandfatherly phase.

One lapse in Redford's portrayal of this old-timer. Take it from an experienced hand on dairy farms that Einar milks his cow on the wrong side. His granddaughter later does it on the right side.

The bear in Redford's film sent me to **GRIZZLY MAN**, a documentary by Werner Herzog. This film is mostly composed of excerpts from video footage that was shot in Alaska by Timothy Treadwell, an ursine enthusiast who spent thirteen summers amid grizzlies and was at last, with his girlfriend, killed by a bear. The only human we really see with the bears is Treadwell himself. If we tried to imagine a subject for a Herzog documentary, the director who did *Aguirre, the Wrath of God,* and *Fitzcarraldo*, the director who said he always wanted the making of his films to involve some kind of physical extremity, we couldn't possibly come up with a more apt Herzogian idea. (A Herzog scriptwriter once said: "I no longer dared to predict whether he might possibly nail his actors to trees in his next film.")

Treadwell was an ex-actor and an ex-junkie who, we are told, went to the wilderness because he lost a leading role in a hit television show. He then made—it is not callous to say in the light of the facts—his own television show, well aware from the start that he was risking his life. He fixed his video camera on himself. We see him often with bears in the background or closer than that as he tells us how he loves them and avows that their life and this place are a refuge from the decadence of the modern world. What he says is largely nonsense, mere sophomoric blather, interesting only because we know how the story ended and because he was, in a

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way, willing to pay the price for his starring role. (His girlfriend's life was not part of the foreseeable.)

The film is repetitious. Herzog has varied the original footage with some interviews that he conducted with a former Treadwell girlfriend and some other friends and observers. Still, an hour of it would have been more effective than the present feature length.

To see *Grizzly Man* just after Redford's film is to note their kinship. Treadwell, with his rejoicings in the wilderness and the creatures who live in it, is telling us directly what Redford has for years been implying. The places that are relatively untouched by civilization, both men say, are the best treasures of that civilization and must be preserved. We might think, however, that it is only the existence of civilization that makes these places attractive—for some. Most of the thought and energy of the human race has aimed at taming the wilderness. Redford and the unfortunate Treadwell are romantics whose romance we can indulgently share as long as we do not have to share the reality. ■

## ROBERT BRUSTEIN ON THEATER

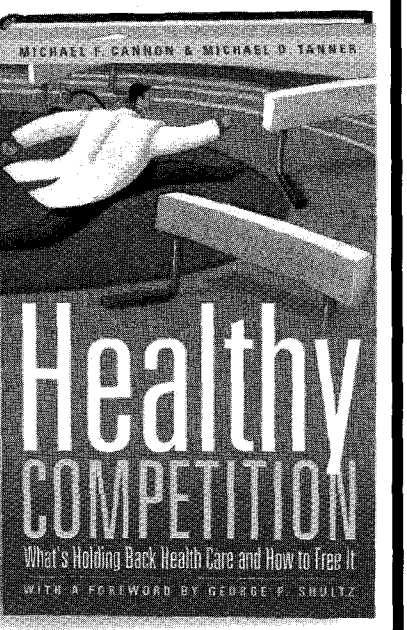
# Theater After 9/11

IN AN OMINOUS COINCIDENCE, the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon occurred around the beginning of the Second Millennium, a time traditionally associated with Apocalypse. In a slightly less apocalyptic synchronism, September 11 also coincides with the beginning of every new theater season. Not that Broadway wants to know. Rather than acknowledge the threats and fevers of our times, the terror that now enshrouds our lives, the commercial stage has been conscientiously devoted to manufacturing escapism and obscurantism, through witless entertainments and irrelevant revivals. In September alone, with the war in Iraq in its third year and Hurricane Katrina continuing to dominate the headlines, *The New York Times* Arts and Leisure section announced new musicals about "trailer trash singing show tunes" (*The Great American Trailer Park*), about "a single guy looking for sex" (*Slut*), about a romance between "a musician with Tourette's syndrome and a journalist with an obsessive-compulsive disorder" (*In My Life*), about "a love triangle involving [Alfred Kinsey], his wife and his lab assistant" (*Dr. Sex*), plus another edition of Elaine Stritch's favorite show tunes. Revivals of *The Fantasticks*, *The Odd Couple*, *The Pajama Game*, *The Caine Mutiny Court-Martial*, *Carrie*, and *Peter Pan*, among other choice tidbits from our showbiz past, are some of the blockbusters promised in the future.

I am as fond of nostalgia and escapism as the next guy, but it is a pity that the commercial stage is failing its opportunity to provide some understanding of our predicament. You would think that Broadway could stir itself over the catastrophe of Hurricane Katrina more vigorously and imaginatively than those worthy curtain speeches by stars asking patrons for disaster relief. As an example of how deftly theater can adapt itself to current events, I refer you to the recently closed revival of *Two Gentlemen of Verona* (the musical version in Central Park) where John Guare, changing only twenty-nine words of the Duke's "Bring All the Boys Back Home" number, transformed it into a rousing commentary on Bush's military and economic failures ("If we didn't have a war / Then where / Would we spend our money / Where / Welfare, Clean Air, Child Care"). It made us aware how some of those failures now poison the flotsam in the flooded streets of New Orleans.

Since the theater is a barometer of how people behave and feel at any given moment in history, I suppose even mindless entertainment says something about how the events of September 11, the Iraq war, and now the disasters in Louisiana and Mississippi have affected the American mind. What it tells us is that when Bush comes to shove, we want to bury our heads in warm sand. It is often noted that the modern stage is out of touch with the deeper concerns and impulses of the society. Even our theater's

"...extraordinarily comprehensive, highly persuasive."
— Milton Friedman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WITH A FOREWORD BY GEORGE P. SHULTZ

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"serious" themes, notably sexual, ethnic, and racial identity, are of less immediate concern to the theatergoing public (those in blue states included) than to people who work in the profession. How else do we explain the large number of one-person shows by gays and lesbians, and their preoccupation with their not-so-private parts?

This disjunction between stage and audience may help to explain why public interest in the stage is dwindling. At the same time that Broadway, when not recycling popular movies in musical form (*The Lion King*, *The Producers*, *Monty Python's Spamalot*), is busy pondering the tribulations of gay baseball players and teenage spelling bee nerds, the rest of the country is worrying about terrorism, body counts, the environment, nuclear proliferation, poverty, the mismanagement of the economy, the futility of the Iraq war, and all the other pressing issues botched by Bush.

Luckily, there is a dramatic world elsewhere, namely not-for-profit theater venues. These are proving somewhat more hospitable to new plays examining significant national themes. And we should be encouraged by a detectable rise in the quality, ambition, and pertinence of the American theater during the time of our many trials. It is true that the resident theater movement, once the great hope for a more adventurous alternative to the commercial stage, lost some of its original spunk after the evisceration of the National Endowment for the Arts caused a precipitous drop-off in public and private funding. It is also true that too often off-Broadway, instead of discovering exciting new talent, seems to be looking for ways to move safe products to the Great White Way.

Still, these last four years were a period when there were as many intelligent and gifted artists writing for the stage as ever before in our history: Tony Kushner, August Wilson, Craig Lucas, Paula Vogel, Suzan-Lori Parks, Richard Nelson, Charles L. Mee Jr., John Patrick Shanley, Sarah Ruhl, Rebecca Gilman, Doug Wright, Stephen Adly Guirgis, Paul Rudnick, Adam Rapp, Tracy Letts—this is a partial list. And they were fashioning plays that were not just limited domestic dramas, but sometimes deep probes into the social and political tissues of the time.

## A Game for Those Abroad at Night

Start with an hour
and circle the village.

Start with a flagpole
at the indigo heart of the square
and circle the village.

Follow a sickle of highway.
Follow one paper route story by story.
Follow a bread truck's little pillows of air
and circle the village

Circle the library's simmering stacks
(there's no help for you there,
no help for you there).
Circle the duck pond's panicky flare.

Trail a moon think or thick
but don't fall for a fool.
Circle your stagger
then circle the school.

Circle mosquitoes breeding in buckets.
Circle your parents asleep in chairs.
Circle bees trawling the wax museums
of heaven.
Circle the honey,
oh, circle the honey.

Circle a wallet's dream of a gutter.
Circle two silos hungry for summer.
Circle a dish eating waves from the air.
Circle the village.

When you've traded your way
through the loop of a locket
and linked the ends of what isn't there,
as your shadow unfolds again into stairs

dismiss wick and tallow,
rumor and adage.
Hang the circle you've circled in air
and kick out the chair,
kick out the chair.

Oh, circle, circle the village.

**TERRI WITEK**

[redacted]

It was also a period when American directors, led by Robert Wilson, Andrei Serban, Anne Bogart, Robert Woodruff, and many others—following in the footsteps of the great European auteurs like Peter Brook and Ingmar Bergman—were continuing their audacious investigations of great classical and modern drama. (And, sadly, it was also a time when we lost some of our most valued artists, notably Arthur Miller in playwriting, Marlon Brando in acting, Susan Sontag, who both directed and wrote for the stage, and Arnold Weinstein, a great librettist and lyricist.)

It is often said that the Al Qaeda attacks on September 11, 2001, created a national trauma as profound as any event in our history. The last four years of American theater have directly or indirectly exposed that psychic wound through its choice of themes, characters, and mood. Unlike Pearl Harbor, which unified the country and stimulated an outburst of anti-Axis sentiment, most American playwrights have been slow to confront directly the repercussions of September 11. In the 1940s, all our leading Broadway dramatists—Robert Sherwood (*There Shall Be No Night*), Lillian Hellman (*Watch on the Rhine*), Maxwell Anderson (*The Eve of St. Mark*), S. N. Behrman (*No Time For Comedy*), among others—were rushing to compose patriotic plays in support of the war effort. And there were innumerable Hollywood movies promoting it as well, usually starring John Wayne and Ronald Reagan. The Al Qaeda attacks produced a lot of bumper stickers and the Patriot Act. Although they initially unified the nation, those attacks did not produce a lasting form of patriotism, largely because of growing doubts about the credibility of our enterprise in Iraq. As for the American theater, this traditionally liberal arena has remained deeply suspicious of the present administration and its propaganda apparatus, especially after it became clear that Iraq had no weapons of mass destruction or any links with Al Qaeda (that is, until the invasion turned Iraq into a breeding ground for terrorism).

Perhaps it is for that reason that the theater did not show much interest in the conduct of the Iraqi war. As for Hollywood, it has produced nothing about the present conflict as cogent as, say, David O. Russell's movie *Three Kings*, in 1999, which dramatized the tragic results of America's broken promises during the first Iraqi invasion. Where the war gets most attention is on

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the television comedy circuit, particularly in the monologues of Jon Stewart, Bill Maher, and Lewis Black.

But a handful of playwrights are just now beginning to examine the effects of September 11 on our national psyches. Tony Kushner wrote a play called *Homebody/Kabul* before the attacks even took place, which evoked the sense of rootlessness and displacement in Afghanistan. Another prescient work, *Terrorism*, by two Siberians called the Presnyakov Brothers, also written before the attacks on New York, extended the metaphor of terror to our daily lives. *Omnium Gatherum* by Theresa Rebeck and Alexandra Gersten-Vassilaros was the first play to focus on the victims of the World Trade Center attack, through the agency of an infernal dinner party, where the dead debate the motives behind September 11 and even invite a terrorist to join the conversation.

It was not long before other playwrights were taking the temperature of the United States following our incursion into Iraq and our brutal treatment of those interned in Guantánamo and Abu Ghraib. Sam Shepard's *The God of Hell* represented a powerful indictment of how our conduct toward prisoners abroad was influencing government behavior at home. (The British also weighed in with such entries as David Hare's *Stuff Happens*, and *Guantánamo: Honor Bound to Defend Freedom*.) In short, after a long period when American political theater was primarily devoted to issues of social injustice and unequal opportunities regarding women, gays and lesbians, blacks, Latinos, and other minorities, it is now beginning to look outward as well, examining our responsibilities toward the world.

It is probable that the catastrophes on our native soil have encouraged us once again to think globally rather than locally. After September 11, we lost a lot of our innocence, not to mention our belief in American invincibility. After Abu Ghraib and Guantánamo, we lost a considerable amount of our moral authority, not to mention our certitude about the righteousness of our cause. After Hurricane Katrina, in a terrifying example of how bad policies can reinforce natural calamities, we lost more of our faith in our government. The American theater is perfectly positioned to chronicle this national unease. A play that provokes pity and terror is not incompatible with a night on the town. ■

# *Robert Alter*
# Howard's End

ON BEAUTY
By Zadie Smith
*(Penguin, 446 pp., $25.95)*

PRECOCIOUS SUCCESS CAN often be a burden to a writer, and this appears to be the case for Zadie Smith. Her ambitious first novel, *White Teeth*, published when she was barely two years out of university, won wide and richly deserved acclaim from critics and readers. It bustled with energy, evinced a rare generosity of imagination, and rendered the wildly various multicultural scene of contemporary London with unflagging satirical zest as well as sympathetic understanding. One readily forgave the moments, and there were more than a few of them, when the book's profusion of florid detail began to seem a little excessive because the book as a whole was such fun to read.

Afterward Smith was evidently anxious to prove that *White Teeth* was no flash in the pan, and so in short order, with unfortunate results, she produced *The Autograph Man*. The main characters stagger through much of this novel dazed by drugs or alcohol, which is about as interesting in the reading as the social experience of being seated at a dinner party next to a garrulous drunk. Smith's idea of lining up the story with various aspects of the Kabbalah's theosophy was something of a surprise, but it never really got off the ground, or rather, off the chapter headings. The immersion of the characters in a particular current of fandom and popular culture mainly conveyed an inadvertent sense that popular culture is a tawdry and tedious affair.

Now, in *On Beauty*, Smith has produced a novel very different from both its predecessors. It is certainly more accomplished than *The Autograph Man*: her reservoir of real talent is undeniable. But the new book has problems of another sort. In sharp contrast to the big urban panorama of *White Teeth*, Smith has chosen to set this novel within the narrow confines of the academy—a fictitious liberal arts college called Wellington, in a prosperous suburb of Boston. Still more unexpected is her decision to model the book on *Howards End*. Some of the major lines of the plot follow those of Forster's novel; quite a few scenes are explicit recastings of scenes from Forster; the self-educated working-class character of *Howards End*, Leonard Bast, reappears here as a rap poet from the black ghetto; a walk-on role is given to a couple named Wilcox, in a wink to the Wilcoxes of Forster's novel; and the first name of the protagonist is Howard. Even the opening sentence is virtually the same as Forster's.

Beyond these games of nomenclature and correspondence, Smith intends a twenty-first-century re-play of Forster's central theme of male hypocrisy about sex. This is a tricky business, because sexual behavior and attitudes toward sex, as she is well aware, have changed so much since 1910. In any case, the parallels with *Howards End* are more important (and perhaps also more amusing) for the writer than they are likely to be for the reader. It is hard to see how they add a significant dimension of meaning—as does, say, Fielding's use of the *Aeneid* in *Amelia*, or Joyce's use of the *Odyssey* in *Ulysses*. Smith's unsubtle imitation of Forster remains puzzling, superfluous, and perhaps a little precious.

The title of *On Beauty* is borrowed, for reasons that are hardly compelling, from the title of Elaine Scarry's rather mechanical effort, in her book of the same name, to apply perceptual psychology to the aesthetics of fictional representation. The pertinence of Smith's title is that Howard Belsey is an art historian dedicated to deconstructing the beauty of great paintings, chiefly Rembrandt's, as masks of ideology and profit-seeking, even as he himself becomes caught by the lure of carnal beauty after decades of devotion to his wife (she is black and American; he is white and British), who with the years has expanded to corpu-

*Robert Alter's most recent book,* IMAGINED CITIES, *was recently published by Yale University Press.*

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lence but remains, in her fleshly abundance, beautiful after her fashion. This is an academic novel that is also a book about a conjugal disaster in the making.

HOWARD BELSEY IS REPRESENTED quite convincingly as a social and psychological type, but he also turns out to be peculiarly unappealing as a principal character. Though he seems well-meaning enough at the beginning, before long it becomes clear that he is an irredeemable mediocrity, intellectually and morally. At the age of fifty-seven, after some academic wanderings, he has spent ten years at Wellington College without ever publishing his promised study of Rembrandt, and hence without tenure. (Ten years tenureless and yet still holding on to a position is an unlikely institutional indulgence at an American university, but Smith goes out of her way, in this respect as in others, to emphasize the continuing muddled failures of Howard's life.) Belsey is a perfect exemplar of academic conformism. It is scarcely surprising that he is unable to produce a book, because what intimations we get of his thinking on art are no more than the mouthing of formulas promoted by left-liberal academic fashions. His analysis of one of Rembrandt's most celebrated paintings is depressingly familiar: "the Staalmeesters are not looking at anyone; there is no one to look at. The painting is an exercise in the depiction of economic power—in Howard's opinion a particularly malign and oppressive depiction."

Howard is given a counterweight in a black British art historian named Monty Kipps, with whom he has had acrimonious written exchanges, and who is eventually appointed to a position at Wellington College. Monty is in all respects an uncompromising conservative—a practicing Christian, a man with a fondness for three-piece suits, someone who thinks that affirmative action encourages a culture of victimhood, and that pigmentation is skin-deep and without any bearing on personal identity. He is also obnoxious as a person, in a style altogether different from Howard's. He is smug, preening, speaks "with the rhythmic smoothness of self-quotation," as the narrator nicely observes, and plausibly seems to Howard's daughter Zora "like a man constantly on the lookout for the camera he knew must be filming him." With all this, one is inclined to infer that he is probably a good deal brighter than Howard.

The antinomy between Howard and Monty, though it generates some interesting moments, is something of a missed opportunity in the novel because the foreground of the narrative is dominated by Howard while Monty is for the most part left to posture in the background, never becoming a fully realized figure. A serious confrontation between the personalities and their outlooks might have thrown the contemporary academic scene that Smith means to represent into instructive focus, but it never quite happens. The one episode in which they actually clash, a debate at a faculty meeting, is founded on a blatant improbability, as I shall explain.

*ON BEAUTY* ILLUSTRATES A general problem of the academic novel. Most academic novels are in one way or another satiric for obvious reasons: the contemporary university is, by and large, a small world populated by puny souls imagining that they are great figures, a world fissured with petty politics and vehement but often trivial rivalries, self-insulated from the wide realm of culture and politics on which it pretends to exert momentous influence. (As Smith's narrator says, "like many academics, Howard was innocent of the world.") What is often problematic about turning all this into satiric fiction is that it amounts to flogging a dead horse. The satire becomes clichéd, a belaboring of the obvious, or it goes way over the top. The latter option is especially tempting to a novelist, since there are so many aspects of academic life that are likely to trigger impatience or fury in an imaginative writer, and so most novelists who have passed through academe have tended to be provoked by the blight in its groves. One might recall Malamud in *A New Life*, or Philip Roth in *Letting Go* and later in *The Human Stain*. An especially symptomatic instance is Francine Prose's *Blue Angel*, a book in which virtually everything about the novel's college—the faculty, the students, even the institutional procedures—proves to be hateful, hypocritical, and oppressive, in the end humiliating and banishing the protagonist, who is, of course, a novelist.

Smith's version of the academic scene is not quite so vitriolic, but it is certainly actuated by a plague-on-both-your-houses feeling, as one can see in the pairing of the mealy-mouthed, ineffectual progressive and the arrogant, self-admiring conservative. One may concede that there is a basis in reality for this attitude, but the academy, like other spheres of life, is more variegated and complicated than such a simple schematic disdain allows. And much of the dialogue assigned to the faculty members and the college administrative staff at Wellington is too cartoonish in diction—Smith is not quite a master of American speech—and in substance to be credible.

The culminating improbability to which I alluded is the confrontation at a faculty meeting between Howard and Monty. The conservative scholar is scheduled to give a major public lecture at the college, and because Howard, as his progressive adversary, fears that the talk may include such harmful heresies as a critique of affirmative action, he argues to the assembled faculty that Monty should be compelled to submit a draft, or at least an outline, of his paper in advance for the censorship of his colleagues. The proposal is voted down—still another humiliation for the hapless Howard; but the notion that any measure of this sort would be put forth at an American college is extremely improbable. Granted, there are manifestations of oblique political coercion on our campuses, much of it the work of so-called progressives, but such an attempt at the open imposition of censorship seems unlikely, and damages the narrator's authority. And the scene unwittingly tilts the balance between Howard and Monty as equally but antithetically off-putting types, because against Howard's heavy-handed attempt at suppressing freedom of expression Monty appears, at least for the moment, sensible and almost dignified.

SMITH'S REFLECTIONS ON HER characters, and in some instances her visual depiction of them, are managed with more intelligence and persuasiveness than her scenes and dialogue. The role of the narrator in this novel is, in fact, one of its biggest sur-

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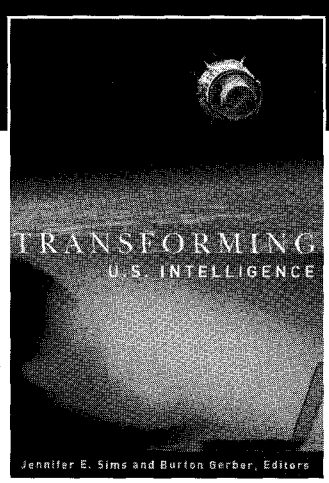
prises. *White Teeth* appealed to many readers precisely because it seemed such a full-throttle expression of a postmodern sensibility, given to energetic improvisation, to an extravagant mélange of human figures and situations, and to a certain deliberate and delightful looseness of form. *On Beauty*, by contrast, is a frankly old-fashioned novel. Perhaps the idea behind it was to do a kind of ventriloquistic homage to *Howards End*, though in some places the book sounds more Edwardian or Victorian than like anything written just before World War I.

The action is mediated by an unabashedly obtrusive narrator who does not hesitate to begin chapters with sentences such as, "We must now jump nine months forward, and back across the Atlantic." This narrator is prepared to inform us, as once upon a time the narrators of novels were wont to do, how we behave in general and how society usually works. "Obviously disappointed, as we sometimes are when the things we profess to dislike don't happen, she looked up abruptly and smiled at him." Or, as an introduction to a party at the Belsey home: "It is an unnatural law of such parties that the person whose position on the guest list was originally the least secure is always the first to arrive." The invention of non-existent social laws, enforced by the weight of the narrator's rhetorical authority, is virtually Balzacian; and so is the claim of universal validity for generalizations about character and society: "like any wife of a superficially attentive man, she was admirably self-contained, apparently without external social needs." A distinctly nineteenth-century "we" of inclusion crops up with surprising frequency: "The older we get the more our kids seem to want us to walk in a very straight line with our arms pinned to our sides, our faces cast with the neutral expression of mannequins.... They must find it comforting."

Propositions about how people in general act may not be entirely true, or may not hold in a good many instances, but as the mannequin image suggests, they are often articulated in this novel with a certain energy of metaphorical imagination. Indeed, much of the liveliness of Smith's novel is focused in the way its running commentary on the characters deploys figuration: "The pomposity of the young man seemed to Howard to be concentrated in his jaw, which he worked round and round as they walked, as if ruminating on the failures of others." "That lively, surprising woman [just deceased] whom Howard had met a year ago in this very room was presently being piously preserved in the aspic of low voices and bland anecdote, pickled in perfection." "The Wilcoxes owned a preppy clothes chain store, gave generously to the college, and looked like the shells of two Atlantic shrimp in evening wear." The wit of these moments almost persuades one that the novelistic manner of an era long gone is still viable, though the certitude of the generalizations, however engagingly phrased, may at times strain credence. Early in the book, Howard's wife, responding to his alarm over the matrimonial plans (which will quickly be aborted) of their older son, exclaims, "Oh, *God*, this isn't 1910," and the reader may be inclined sometimes to share that sentiment. This novel by this daring young writer seems insufficiently daring, even anachronistic in its ideas and its methods.

Ultimately, *On Beauty* is not a novel about the academic world or about racial politics, important as both are in the book. Its deeper subject is how men treat women, and about the purported differences, both moral and psychological, between men and women. Howard, a faithful husband for three decades, betrays his wife twice, first with a female colleague (a well-known poet, white, very lean, and decidedly of a certain age) and then with a nineteen-year-old student (black, extravagantly beautiful, and the initiator in the sexual encounter). The erotic scene with the teenager, which is both riveting and troubling, is done with great panache. Whether it is entirely credible I cannot claim to judge. Had such an episode occurred in a novel by Philip Roth, it would be roundly dismissed as the self-indulgent fantasy of an aging white male. But this urgently eager young beauty seducing an over-the-hill male professor in Smith's novel was conceived by a twenty-nine-year-old woman of color, so perhaps one should not be skeptical.

The novel shows us men—as it turns out, Howard is not alone in succumbing to injudicious carnality—behaving questionably with much younger women and badly toward their wives, even as they spend their days professing political and intellectual rectitude. This story does engage the imagination for a good while because it is, after all, an understandable story about how the weak-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ness of the flesh, whatever the pretensions of the willing spirit, gets people into deep trouble. As the plot evolves, however, it comes to seem more and more didactically insistent. I am not sure whether Smith had a feminist purpose in mind (in other respects, she does not at all seem to be an ideologically driven writer), but the moral chasm between the sexes as the narrative plays out is too wide to command full credence. There is not a single male character one could call attractive.

Smith's men are namby-pambies, hypocrites, egotists, manipulators, or phonies. Of the three Belsey children, the oldest son is a muzzy-headed and rather flaccid convert to Christian piety, the younger son a silly would-be denizen of the ghetto ready to perpetrate any stupidity in order to please his brothers in the hood, and only the struggling daughter evinces a certain courage about being herself and appropriately asserting herself in the world. Since the perspective of the book is largely satiric, some of the minor female characters are also exposed to the light of ridicule; but in the end the only authentic bond between two characters is the one between the wives of Howard and Monty, each suffering in a different way from the small and large indignities of life with a self-absorbed and ultimately obtuse man.

The novel ends with a conjugal train-wreck that is utterly dismaying, though I suspect that it is meant to seem a moment of liberation for Howard's wife. In the last scene, Howard appears rather like a villain in the concluding pages of a Dickens novel, rejected by his earth-mother wife, who has plenty of women's solidarity to make up for his loss, reviled in a vulgar gesture by his three children, on the brink of being forced from his job, and about to lecture on Rembrandt's *Hendrickje Bathing*, a subject he is incompetent to discuss because he does not grasp what beauty really means.

FINALLY *ON BEAUTY* IS AN ODD mixture—alternately amusing, perceptive, even emotionally absorbing, with some of the narrative zest of *White Teeth*, and then too often schematic, insistent, or simply not quite credible. The American academic setting, which Smith knows but perhaps not well enough, and the emulation of *Howards End*, which is an interesting idea that does not altogether fit this fictional world, may have led her astray. As a novelist, she can marshal shrewd understanding, stylistic flair, vivid description, and a lively sense of comedy. All this may yet enable her to produce great fiction, but *On Beauty* is still far from that.

Smith's decision to emulate Forster's novel in fact reminds us how much the ground of fiction has shifted since 1910. Everything in *Howards End* is predicated on fine gradations and distinctions between classes, and it is the writer's intimate knowledge of the class system that enables the authoritative pronouncements of the narrator. When Margaret Schlegel initially encounters Leonard Bast at a concert (a scene replayed by Smith), the first thing we are told about him is that "his class was near enough her own for its manners to vex her." Much of what we learn about him later belongs to the same category of knowledge: "Leonard Bast, stood at the extreme verge of gentility;" he was "one of the thousands who have lost the life of the body and failed to reach the life of the spirit"; and so forth. Contemporary society lacks this sort of clearly articulated class system. Character now is a function of something as crude as ideology or style, or as elusive as individual temperament. *On Beauty* certainly registers an awareness of this change, but a less assured and authoritative novel is called for in order to represent the contexts of character in the world we live in now. ■

*Alan Wolfe*

# Mrs. America

PHYLLIS SCHLAFLY AND GRASSROOTS CONSERVATISM: A WOMAN'S CRUSADE
By Donald T. Critchlow
*(Princeton University Press, 422 pp., $29.95)*

## I.

FEW LIVING AMERICANS ARE more deserving of the kind of exhaustive political biography that Donald T. Critchlow has written than Phyllis Schlafly. If political influence consists in transforming this huge and cantankerous country in one's preferred direction, Schlafly has to be regarded as one of the two or three most important Americans of the last half of the twentieth century. Tireless, committed, strategically brilliant, undeterred: she grew up in the Old Right environment of xenophobic isolationism and helped to transform it into a New Right politics of anti-communism. Had she never been born, the Constitution would now include an Equal Rights Amendment. Without ever serving in the House of Representatives—she ran twice, losing both times—she played an instrumental role in driving moderates out of the Republican Party and replacing them with the hard-right politicians who currently dominate Congress. Tom DeLay owes more to Phyllis Schlafly than she owes to him.

One way to take the measure of Schlafly's significance is to compare her to Betty Friedan, which Critchlow sometimes does. Betty Naomi Goldstein was born in Peoria, Illinois in 1921, while Phyllis Stewart was born three years later and not too far away in St. Louis, Missouri. Both were educated in part in Massachusetts: Friedan at Smith, Schlafly, for her master's degree, at Radcliffe. Neither woman could be defined as liberal: Friedan worked with organizations close to the Communist Party, while Schlafly spent her life in one extreme right-wing organization after another. Nor was either a member of America's Protestant majority: Friedan is Jewish, Schlafly Catholic. One may have defined feminism and the other anti-feminism, but neither woman would be caught dead staying home full time and raising children. Of course they had significant political differences, but the most important point at which they diverged was temperamental. "I'd like to burn you at the stake," the hotheaded Friedan told Schlafly during a debate in 1973, to which the imperturbable Schlafly replied, "I'm glad you said that because it just shows the intemperate nature of proponents of ERA."

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Friedan has been the subject of two major biographies. Schlafly has only now achieved her second with the publication of Critchlow's book. (The first, Carol Felsenthal's *The Sweetheart of the Silent Majority*, appeared in 1981). Yet despite the fact that Friedan received more attention in the past, Schlafly is likely to get the lion's share of public scrutiny in the future. To understand Friedan is to know the left, but to grasp Schlafly is to come to terms with America. Friedan's books will continue to be read—*The Feminine Mystique*, for all its hyperbole, really is a classic; and no one can say the same of any of Schlafly's books, including her best-selling *A Choice Not an Echo*, three and a half million copies of which have been purchased by presumably avid readers. But in politics, actions have a way of speaking louder than words. Friedan, despite being a founder of the National Organization of Women, was never much of an activist. Schlafly raised the art of activism to new levels. Schlafly did more to bring the people with whom she agreed into the political process than Friedan could ever have dreamed.

It was a stroke of considerable inventiveness for Critchlow to persuade Schlafly to cooperate with him. Too bad that the book he produced is dreadful. Critchlow is right to insist on Schlafly's influence—but influence is a neutral category. It may be a force for good or a force for ill, depending upon the ideas that animate it. Let it be said of Phyllis Schlafly that every idea she had was scatter-brained, dangerous, and hateful. The more influential she became, the worse off America became. But Critchlow can barely bring himself to lift his eyes from the Schlafly papers long enough to examine her views with anything approaching a critical perspective. Critchlow is by no means a leftist academic historian implacably hostile to his right-wing subject. Quite the contrary. His book is fair and balanced, in the Fox News sense of those terms. Not even saints should be admired as much as Critchlow worships Schlafly, and Schlafly is not a saint.

## II.

PHYLLIS STEWART WAS NOT quite born a blue-diaper baby. (In those days, red stood for the left, not for the states that vote Republican.) Stewart wore a Wilkie button in 1940, wrote term papers defending the United Nations, and hoped to work for the federal government. When no federal job opened up, she went instead to the American Enterprise Association (later the American Enterprise Institute) and emerged in her early twenties as a full-throated conservative. A year after she started at the AEA, she moved back to St. Louis to work for Towner Phelan, a right-wing banker, editing a newsletter and becoming active in political campaigns. Soon thereafter she married Fred Schlafly, a devout Catholic and a deeply conservative adherent to the Old Right.

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*Phyllis Schlafly in 1979*

Long before William F. Buckley Jr. modernized American conservatism with the *National Review*, Midwestern America was honeycombed with people who denounced Franklin Delano Roosevelt, saw no role for the United States in the struggle against European fascism, and hated east-coast elites for their cosmopolitanism. The Schlaflys were part of this milieu. The world they idealized was filled with rugged individualists, and it had no place for labor unions, cities, racial minorities, Jews, or liberated women.

Although remarkably uninterested in taking on Hitler while he was killing all those European Jews, adherents of the Old Right became obsessed with the evils of communism in the years after World War II. They denounced Harry Truman for not allowing General MacArthur to cross the Yalu River and wipe out North Korea. They supported Captive Nations Week and the Cardinal Mindszenty Foundation, a Catholic-oriented anti-communist group named after the priest imprisoned by the Hungarian communist regime and presided over to this day by Eleanor Schlafly, Fred's younger sister. Joe McCarthy they trusted and admired completely. In 1954, they urged passage of the Bricker Amendment, which would have effectively prevented American presidents from negotiating international treaties, and they were furious when President Eisenhower called for its defeat. They were opposed to summit meetings and bans on the atmospheric testing of nuclear weapons. General Edwin Walker, who was recalled for distributing materials published by the John Birch Society to troops under his command, was in their view a martyr. They wanted Fidel Castro overthrown. Communism was the incarnation of the devil, and no one, least of all anyone belonging to a Christian nation such as the United States, should have anything to do with it.

Unfortunately for the interests of doctrinal purity, China was quite capable of responding to an invasion of North Korea by sending in massive numbers of troops, and the Soviet Union could neither be dislodged from Eastern Europe nor stripped of nuclear weapons that were capable of wiping out a few American cities. The liberals whom Schlafly and her crowd saw as little different from the communists, moreover, included individuals far more dedicated to protecting American democracy from totalitarianism than blustering right-

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wing zealots. For one thing, they were willing to tax and spend to do so. Conservatives during the 1950s were free to advocate extreme, and highly impractical, measures, as well as to accuse everyone who disagreed with them of treason, because they had no responsibility for making policy.

They were, almost all of them, demagogues pure and simple, capable of saying anything and doing anything, no matter how damaging to their country, so long as it served their cause. And Schlafly personified the irresponsibility of their politics. In 1952, at the age of twenty-seven, she ran for Congress, urging huge increases in defense spending and aggressive actions in Korea, all the while opposing a draft and calling for a smaller government. Her positions could be so incoherent because no one believed that she would win. (She was, in fact, trounced by the incumbent Melvin Price.)

SO LONG AS MODERATES WERE influential in the Republican Party, Schlafly and like-minded conservatives would be on the outs; but they obtained a taste of what political power might mean when they successfully pushed for Barry Goldwater as the Republican nominee for president in 1964. The origins of the Goldwater boom could be traced to a meeting between Nelson Rockefeller and Richard Nixon in 1960 when, in return for Rockefeller's support, Nixon agreed to endorse a civil rights plank calling for "aggressive action to remove the remaining vestiges of segregation or discrimination in all areas of national life." This was too much for the right-wing activists from the South and Southwest, who were intent on taking over Abraham Lincoln's party for their own bigoted ends. Goldwater had voted against the Civil Rights Act of 1964, and conservatives such as Schlafly loved him for it. Conservatives maintained that their opposition to the Civil Rights Act was based on a preference for state's rights over federal power, but no one, least of all their enthusiastic followers, was fooled. Conservatism was in large part a revolt by whites against the aspirations of blacks, and whatever success it enjoyed was a by-product of the backlash that it generated.

Stunned by the size of the Goldwater defeat, moderate and centrist Republicans took back their party, engineering along the way a successful move to prevent Phyllis Schlafly from becoming the president of the National Federation of Republican Women. On the outside throughout much of the 1970s, Schlafly spent considerable time attacking Nixon, whom she had supported for president in 1968. It was not only Nixon's opening to China that infuriated adherents of the hard right; he also made the dastardly mistake of negotiating a strategic arms limitation treaty with the Russians, as well as one that would limit each nation's capacity to build anti-ballistic missile systems. "The delusion that America can be defended by treaties instead of by weapons is the most persistent and pernicious of all liberal fallacies," Schlafly thundered. Her honor roll of liberals included Henry Kissinger and Paul Nitze, both of whom she denounced repeatedly, ignoring Goldwater's admonition to rightists that Kissinger was more conservative than they were. Even as late as the Carter administration, conservatives were attacking Kissinger as a traitor, this time because he helped to negotiate the treaty that turned the Panama Canal over to Panama.

THE ONLY HOPE THE HARD right had for taking over the Republican Party—and, after that, the United States—lay in mobilizing all those angered by the cultural transformations of the 1960s. Schlafly's singular contribution to the conservative cause lay in grasping the opportunity offered by the Equal Rights Amendment. The campaign for the ERA may have begun as a bipartisan way to extend primarily symbolic support to the feminist movement, but by the time Schlafly had gotten her hands on the issue, it was transformed into a subversive move to destroy motherhood, harm children, and wipe out the nuclear family. It proved to be quite easy to take some of the more extreme statements made by feminist activists—there were plenty to choose among—and then to charge that they represented the "real" agenda of the ERA, even though the ERA was supported by such decidedly unrevolutionary Americans as Betty Ford.

The ugliness of American politics today can be directly traced back to Schlafly's vituperative, apocalyptic, character-assassinating campaign against the ERA. In *Slander*, her 2002 contribution to American letters, Ann Coulter described Schlafly as "one of the most accomplished and influential people in America" and "a senior statesman in the Republican Party." Coulter was right. Karl Rove only perfected what Phyllis Schlafly invented. And the wild, filthy rhetoric of Coulter and some of her screaming reactionary colleagues owes a great deal to Schlafly. We are lucky, come to think of it, that Schlafly flourished in the days before cable.

Critchlow runs quickly over the last quarter century of American politics, devoting only a few pages to the rise of Ronald Reagan, and Newt Gingrich's Contract with America, and the triumph of George W. Bush. In part this was because Schlafly succeeded so well that she rendered herself superfluous. Why rely on such a divisive figure from the past, when everyone in the Republican Party had become a Schlaflyite? She continued to play a role in American politics—for example, by strongly endorsing Lee Atwater's use of Willie Horton to scare voters away from Michael Dukakis; and she received her share of recognition, including an invitation to the White House to hear George W. Bush speak against human cloning. Yet it was also true that with the new century, the Republican Party has passed Schlafly by.

The reason for her marginalization is significant. Schlafly's skill was grassroots mobilization, but the Republican Party has become an inside-the-Beltway machine financed by corporate interests. Still committed to the Old Right's belief in small government, she is an anomaly in an era of Bushian largesse. Anti-immigrant and hostile to minorities, she has no role to play in Republican outreach to African Americans and Hispanics. Ever a latent isolationist, her speeches do not call for American troops to be sent to Iraq, or for a revival of the draft to help bring democracy to that country. Phyllis Schlafly got the Republican Party to where it is, but she cannot take it any further, and not just because she is in her eighties. All her skills lie in opposition. Governance is foreign to her. She will be lionized by Republicans so long as they remain in power, but her work is

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done, and George W. Bush's America is the result.

## III.

IT WOULD BE DIFFICULT TO WRITE the life of a person as tireless in her energies and divisive in her intentions as Phyllis Schlafly without expressing a point of view. Critchlow's view is at least consistent. Schlafly is his heroine, and her enemies are his own.

In 1962, William F. Buckley Jr. wrote off the John Birch Society as hopelessly paranoid and destructive to the cause of modern conservatism. It was a defining moment for the right-wing movement, and a number of hard-right conservatives joined with Buckley, including Fulton Lewis Jr. and Fred Schwarz. If conservatism was to be taken seriously in America, they realized, it would have to distance itself from an organization that deemed Dwight D. Eisenhower a communist agent. But the Schlaflys had no objection to such an organization. Robert Welch, who founded the Birch Society, claimed Phyllis Schlafly as "one of our most loyal members," and Critchlow, while denying that Fred Schlafly joined the group, never challenges Welch's assessment about Phyllis. Nor did the Schlaflys mind—indeed, they seemed to welcome—the presence of Birchers in the Cardinal Mindszenty Foundation, despite the fact that increasing numbers of Catholics close to the Church's hierarchy, including many who once supported the group, had become persuaded that its extremism was not only dangerous to democracy but was on the wrong side of Catholic social teachings. There is simply no doubting the matter: the Schlaflys belonged to the wing of the conservative movement that, by adhering to the dictum of no enemies to the right, threatened the toleration and the pluralism that made American democracy flourish.

Yet none of this perturbs Critchlow, who defends the Schlaflys' soft spot for the Birch Society at every turn. Buckley and other conservatives, he writes, split with the Birch Society not out of principle, but to avoid being labeled extremist. He reduces the complaints of Catholic critics of the Mindszenty Foundation to a charge of financial hanky-panky and then dismisses them as unfounded. True, the controversy over the role that Phyllis Schlafly played in the Birch Society does arouse Critchlow's ire—but his passion is directed against the Birch Society's opponents! Convinced that groups as paranoid and irresponsible as the Birchers were a threat to American democracy, writers such as Arnold Forster and Benjamin Epstein of the Anti-Defamation League wrote *Danger on the Right* in 1964, to warn against such hard-right extremism. Critchlow's response is to attack them for not differentiating between violence-prone groups such as the Minutemen and more "populistic" activists such as Schlafly. Critics of the hard right claimed to be protecting democracy, Critchlow writes, but "in reality they were probably more afraid of the political activism that could defeat liberal candidates for office."

NOR IS CRITCHLOW THE LEAST bit concerned with Schlafly's views about racial and religious minorities. Like others on the right, Schlafly was convinced that a cabal of media executives, international bankers, and assorted Bilderbergers and Trilateralists ran the world—but Critchlow notes reassuringly that "she never identified Jews as part of any conspiracy." Yes, she was attracted to Richard Nixon's law and order campaign in 1968, and she did indeed write that the 1967 race riots were "organized by outside agitators and armed guerrillas, by various civil rights and New Left groups saturated with communists and pro-communists," and, to be sure, she was involved with the Willie Horton ads, but, Critchlow gratuitously adds, "race was never an issue in any of her races for Congress."

Comments such as these betray a depressingly profound ignorance of how racial and religious hatred works in the United States. It is as if Critchlow never heard about code words—those infamous messages designed to be received as racist or anti-Semitic without explicitly mentioning Jews and blacks. He can actually write that Schlafly believed that "America faced an enemy within that threatened the traditional order of a Christian-based society" without pausing to comment that such an analysis writes non-Christians out of the society in which they have lived for centuries.

Instead of calling Schlafly on the carpet for her bigotry, Critchlow again attacks her critics. Invariably, those who pointed out the racism that fueled the hard right are portrayed as "unfair," "vicious," "sinister," and engaged in "guilt by association." No such language is ever used to describe out-and-out racists: Strom Thurmond is described as "one of the most admired politicians in the South." There are intolerant bigots in America, Critchlow tells his readers, but they are to be found on the left. It was the supporters of the ERA who engaged in stereotyping, and threatened violence, and practiced the arts of extremism. This would be a powerful point to make if it were true, but consider some of the examples he offers. One of them is an episode of *Cagney and Lacey*, a television series of the 1980s, in which a deranged psychopath decides to kill an anti-feminist crusader who takes off her left earring when making phone calls. Anyone familiar with Schlafly, who evidently has this nervous habit, would have understood this as an incitement to violence, Critchlow argues. It is a dubious point in its own right, but it is rendered substantially irrelevant by the fact that, due to pressure from the right, airing of the show was postponed for months.

NEITHER THIS EXAMPLE, NOR an even more irrelevant one of a nut-case witch casting a spell over Schlafly at a conference attended by around a hundred

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people, deters Critchlow from his conclusion: noble, self-sacrificing, fair-minded, Phyllis Schlafly stood there bravely, and unflinchingly suffered the slings and arrows launched by her enemies. And his book descends into utter vapidity when he tries to present Schlafly as a serious defense intellectual, writing scholarly tomes on such subjects as the SALT treaty or the Anti-Ballistic Missile System. In reality, she teamed up with kooky former military officers such as Admiral Chester Ward to write a series of screeds which, if anyone had taken them seriously, would have brought the United States into a full-scale nuclear war with the Soviet Union. The United States, Schlafly and Ward insisted, should build a first-strike nuclear force capable of destroying the Soviet Union, adding, along the way, an ABM system in case the Russians should attack us. Their ideas had a certain intuitive appeal, but only to those completely ignorant of how the world really worked. So long as the Soviets could respond to any attack on our part by launching an attack of their own, and so long as there was even a remote possibility that an ABM system would fail, deterrence, which Schlafly and Ward denounced, was the only strategy available. Published by obscure firms, their books deteriorated in both coherence and sales over the years.

Yet Critchlow presents the views of Schlafly and Ward as if they were part of a responsible discussion about American nuclear strategy. "The debate between the two sides," he writes, "was technical, with different assumptions brought to the table.... Still, evaluating specific weapons systems allowed much room for honest disagreement on both sides." This is gibberish. There never was a "debate" between two "sides," both of which were "honest." There were foreign policy officials making tough decisions about protecting American lives against Soviet missiles and there was, off in the far corners of the lunatic fringe, a group of embittered reactionaries writing furious diatribes taken seriously by no one—except, that is, Critchlow. It is true that in the late 1970s and early 1980s critics of deterrence emerged who entertained ideas of "nuclear warfighting" and "nuclear victory"; but they were genuine defense intellectuals, whatever the merits of their arguments, and Schlafly was a raving amateur. *Kissinger on the Couch*, her second-to-last collaboration with Ward, a paranoid fantasy that reduced Kissinger's ideas about foreign policy to his outsized psychology and was filled with elementary errors, is described by Critchlow as having "presented their most sophisticated analysis of American defense policy." He may be correct, but it is very faint praise.

Everyone, in Critchlow's view, misunderstood this poor woman. Journalists frequently identified her as part of the "New Right," but this was incorrect; Schlafly hung out with New Rightists, he argues, but she was not one herself. Moderate Republicans—with neither irony nor quotation marks does Critchlow characterize them as the "Pharisees of the GOP"—did not like her extremism, but their real fear may have been that she and her followers "were too observant in their belief of what constitutes principled conservatism." And liberals hated Schlafly because she not only beat them in the ERA campaign, but did so with a kind of grace under pressure that liberals could never muster. Some people, nearing the end of lives filled with contention and discord, write apologetic autobiographies designed to shed the best possible light on their actions. Phyllis Schlafly will never have to do that; she found a reputable historian to do it for her.

## IV.

In one of his footnotes, Critchlow offers an explanation of why he fell under the spell of Phyllis Schlafly. Schlafly, in his view, embodies a form of conservatism closely tied to the concerns of ordinary people. "The grassroots Right," he writes, "believed that political change could occur through the democratic process and had nothing in common with the extremists, who called for revolutionary change through violence." Like other historians, Critchlow believes that the extremist groups such as the Minutemen or the Ku Klux Klan are beyond the pale, but that people such as Schlafly, who rely on the ballot box and win by out-organizing their opponents, are not only legitimate, but frequently admirable. They are part of an American tradition called populism. If you do not like what Schlafly believes, then you do not like what millions of Americans believe, for all that Schlafly did was to tap into widespread feelings of discontent throughout the American heartland.

Schlafly performed a special service, Critchlow adds, by contributing to the politics of gender. The women whom she attracted to the Republican Party possessed what he calls a "unique sensibility." Active in organizations such as the National Federation of Republican Women and the Daughters of the American Revolution, they held to the twin goals of "a libertarian espousal of the virtues of small government and individual responsibility with a faith in traditional values and divine moral authority." To dismiss such women as little old ladies in tennis shoes is to miss how central their moral perspective was to the shaping of contemporary American politics.

Critchlow's points may sound reasonable, but none of them stand up to close examination. Fellow-travelers exist on the right just as they once did on the left, and the relationship between violence-prone groups and those that focus on electoral tactics are closer than Critchlow acknowledges. Schlafly knows this, even if Critchlow does not: had she denounced the John Birch Society for its extremism, she would have lost the support of hordes of angry Americans who gave her dollars and signatures. When Goldwater announced that "extremism in the defense of liberty is no vice," he made clear to all concerned that he shared Schlafly's opportunistic relationship with the lunatic fringe. One does not need to endorse violence to endanger democracy; one need only to refuse to condemn the violent while benefiting from the discontent that they tap.

It may well be the case that Schlafly performed an admirable public service by bringing into politics the voices of conservative women. Yet Critchlow never addresses the issue of gender in any comprehensive way. Did it matter that Schlafly was a woman? Most likely it did, since an anti-feminist campaign led by a man would have lacked credibility. But who were her supporters, and why were they attracted to her cause? Critchlow deals with these questions only by dismissing a once-popular theory that conservatism appeals to those left behind by modernization. In this he is correct, but the point raises more questions than it answers. Why would women whose incomes were rising and whose position in life was secure be attracted to a politics so hostile to a feminist movement seeking higher incomes and greater security

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for women? Critchlow does not say. Issues involving women, especially the ERA, play a prominent role in Critchlow's book, but women themselves rarely do, at least in part because the movement to which they were attracted remained dominated by men.

Even the actual woman known as Phyllis Schlafly hardly shows up in Critchlow's biography of her. How did someone so strongly committed to the role women ought to play in private life feel about her intense involvement in public life? What did Fred Schlafly, whose views on women were suitably retrograde, think of the travels and the commitments of his wife, who was also the mother of his six children? Indeed, who were those children, and how do they feel about their mother? These, too, are questions Critchlow ignores, and his book suffers for it. Surely conservatives would not agree with the leftists of the 1960s that the personal is the political—except that in fact they do. They insist that religion, which in America is intensely personal, teaches proper respect for gender differences, a question that is profoundly political. If it is true, as Schlafly maintained, that women benefit from a "Christian tradition of chivalry" based on the notion that men should work to support their families, was Phyllis Schlafly's political involvement consistent with her moral and religious principles?

Populism, Critchlow writes in his determination to justify almost everything Schlafly and her like-minded friends said or did, was not an opportunistic stance on the part of conservative activists, but "a sincere expression of their belief that they represented the common person against the political elites." He could not be more wrong. Schlafly was in fact highly selective in her populism, willing to arouse public opinion on matters in which it accorded with her beliefs, but just as willing to deny the importance of public opinion on issues that did not. Perhaps the single major fault of Critchlow's book is that he completely swallows the currently fashionable idea that the rise of conservatism in American politics is a backlash against the elitist and haughty policies of out-of-touch liberals. This idea is not in all cases false: on abortion, and to some degree on gay rights, liberals, relying on the courts, have indeed gotten so far in front of public opinion that a backlash from the right became inevitable. Yet the tired cliché that conservatives are populists taking advantage of liberal arrogance is spectacularly misapplied to the very issue that made Schlafly famous, and that consumes more pages in Critchlow's book than any other. I refer to the Equal Rights Amendment.

THE ERA PASSED BOTH HOUSES of Congress by huge majorities: 84 to 8 in the Senate, 354 to 23 in the House. It was then approved by 35 of the 38 state legislatures necessary for ratification, before losing political steam. You cannot get more democratic than that. Liberals who are denounced by conservatives for relying on undemocratic courts are almost never praised by them when they do exactly the opposite and take on the rigorous work of passing a constitutional amendment. Schlafly had her reasons for opposing the ERA, but, having set herself so resolutely against a measure that had such widespread support, populism could hardly have been one of them. Yet never once in discussing the ERA does Critchlow mention the elitist nature of Schlafly's opposition to it. If anything, he portrays the anti-ERA activists as just folks, "middle-American women," in his words, "down-to-earth and not given to airs of sophistication."

Going once more out of his way to defend Schlafly, Critchlow points out how consistent she was, for not only did she oppose the ERA, the brainchild of liberals, she also opposed a constitutional amendment to balance the budget supported by conservatives. Schlafly, he writes, feared that a constitutional convention, once brought into existence to balance the budget, could be taken over by liberals for their own ends. Such consistency would be a credit to her if it were true, though it would add one more nail in the coffin of her populism. Not only was Schlafly opposed to the democratic zeal that a convention could unleash, she also joined with the liberal "elitists" she so frequently attacked, including the ACLU and the People for the American Way, to stop it.

But Critchlow's insistence on Schlafly's consistency is not true. For one thing, the ERA and the Balanced Budget Amendment are not comparable. The ERA got as far as it did by the alternative route allowed under the Constitution: passage by two-thirds of both houses of Congress and three-fourths of the state legislatures. (No amendment has ever been ratified through the convention process.) More, Schlafly was a vigorous advocate for including, in the Republican platform in 1984, a commitment to adding a Human Life Amendment to the Constitution, and if, in her more recent opposition to gay marriage, she has come out against the Musgrave Amendment, which would ban it in all states, Critchlow never mentions the fact. Clearly this is a woman who put her ends first and worried about the means later—and so could be a populist here and an elitist there, an opponent of the amendment process on some issues and a defender of it on others.

SELECTIVE IN ITS INDIGNATION, inconsistent in its analysis, unbalanced in its evaluations, *Phyllis Schlafly and Grassroots Conservatism* is a great opportunity missed. The left in America has not paid as much attention to the right as the right has paid to the left, and the result has been a huge hole in the number of serious books by historians and political scientists dealing with people such as Phyllis Schlafly. As Critchlow rightly remarks, historians who write about American conservatism tend to concentrate on intellectuals, missing along the way the important contribution made by those more preoccupied with winning adherents to right-wing ideas than formulating them. "We taught 'em politics," Schlafly says of her own ability to get people on her side involved in campaigns.

But what kind of politics did Schlafly teach 'em? In this regard, the problems with Critchlow's book have little to with ideology and a great deal to do with naïveté. His research is exhaustive and his subject is important. He just does not understand that some people—in America these days, far too many people—use politics to divide and destroy. There really are activists out there in the United States so blinded by prejudice, so hostile to their fellow citizens, and so ignorant of how the world works, that they constitute a great danger to their society—far greater, given their numbers, than any threat now posed by the left. Telling the story of how one of their most energetic members transformed America in her image should not be an occasion to celebrate how well democracy works. It ought more properly to serve as a lament for a lost political world characterized by tolerance, bipartisan cooperation, an appreciation of complexity, and (imagine this!) a respect for reality. ■

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## SEOUL DIARIST

# Southern Democrats

MICHAEL HOROWITZ IS leaning so far over his desk, I fear he might jump into my lap. At his Washington office, the veteran conservative activist is excitedly explaining his current cause: North Korean human rights. Just as during the anti-apartheid movement, Horowitz says in rapid-fire cadences, a coalition of American pastors, rabbis, liberal human rights activists, and conservative politicians has united to face down the holocaust of our time: Pyongyang's concentration camps. Thousands at the camps are reportedly starved, tortured, and even forced to undergo abortions. Ultimately, Horowitz predicts, this movement will help push Kim Jong Il into exile, where the Dear Leader can while away his days "with his porno magazines and his sushi chef." When I run into Horowitz again this summer, it's at a Freedom House conference on North Korean human rights, where he is surrounded by people who feel as fervently about the North. Hundreds of people, from Korean-American families to college students to Natan Sharansky, spend the day pouring out their emotions. Activists plan how to pressure China to protect Korean refugees—Chinese authorities often hunt down refugees and return them to the North, where they are jailed or executed.

SEVERAL WEEKS LATER, I AM IN SEOUL, and the contrast is stark. My arrival coincides with a visit by top North Korean officials wearing Kim Jong Il buttons, in town to celebrate the sixtieth anniversary of the end of World War II. The North Koreans are received like heroes in Seoul's parliament. Meanwhile, human rights activists in Seoul tell me the government prevented them from holding protests near the Pyongyang delegation. Sadly, that's not surprising. Over the past seven years, as South Korea has pursued its "sunshine policy" of engagement toward Pyongyang, Seoul's leaders, former human rights activists themselves, have purposely avoided the crisis only a few miles north of their gleaming city—they fear emphasizing human rights will complicate their intense efforts to push the two Koreas toward reunification. Last year, a top South Korean minister asked groups to stop encouraging North Koreans to defect, and South Korea has abstained from U.N. resolutions on North Korean human rights. Another South Korean minister compared political freedoms for North Koreans to pearls for pigs—unnecessary luxuries.

SOME SOUTH KOREAN HUMAN RIGHTS activists feel physically threatened by people who favor close ties with the North. One afternoon, a contact takes me to a safehouse in the Seoul suburbs, where I wait for Kim Duk Hong, a North Korean with top regime connections who defected in 1997. After an hour bantering about foreign policy, I ask Kim about his relations with the South Korean government. His slight frame stiffens, and his raspy voice rises. "One of my main missions to come to Seoul is to fight against Kim Jong Il, and I want to go to Washington to explain this," he croaks, jabbing his finger. "But South Korea still will not issue any passport for me, so I cannot go."

SEOUL'S HUMAN RIGHTS POLICY REFLECTS a deeper divide threatening one of the most important U.S. alliances. For decades, American officials in Seoul built ties to the conservative politicians who ruled the country during the authoritarian period and early days of democracy. But these older politicians aren't in charge any more. The younger, more left-wing politicians—who came of age not during the Korean War but under dictators with ties to the United States, and who are less suspicious of North Korea and China and more hostile to the United States—are running the government. Few younger South Koreans seem worried about the North's nukes, and, in the subtle dance of the current six-party talks on North Korea's nuclear program, Seoul often appeared to be taking Pyongyang's side, such as when it backed North Korea's civilian nuclear program. Recently, some South Koreans have even been holding protests against the erection of a statue of Douglas MacArthur in Inchon, where MacArthur's forces landed to help liberate the South during the Korean war. And, if those tensions don't wake up the White House, how about this? A recent poll found that, if war were to break out between Washington and Pyongyang, some 65 percent of young South Koreans would side with North Korea.

AND YET, TOO OFTEN, THE UNITED States only adds to its problems here. Americans come to Seoul and see a wealthy, free nation, without understanding how South Koreans, recently one of the poorest nations in Asia, view their country as incredibly vulnerable. (Estimates of costs for reunification of the Koreas hover above $500 billion.) Lecturing the South on human rights often backfires, hardening public opinion here against doing more to help North Korean refugees. Plus, the United States often seems hypocritical. Last year, Congress passed an act to help the North Koreans gain access to U.S. refugee programs, but it hasn't funded the act. U.S. embassies still turn away North Koreans.

AND, DESPITE ALL THE UPROAR ABOUT human rights coming from the United States, often the most committed activists are left on the sidelines. On my last full day in Seoul, I stop by the offices of Venerable Pomnyun Sunim, a veteran human rights campaigner and respected monk. Near a room where devotees bow before statues of Buddha, Sunim tells me that he just wants to find practical ways to protect North Korean refugees. But he suggests that too many activists and politicians, here and in Washington, may be uninterested in practicalities. "In the 1990s, a lot of people took part in helping the North Korean refugees," the monk says. Now, he says, the issue has become politicized in Seoul, and shining a spotlight on it only pushes China to deal more harshly with refugees: "After North Korean refugees became an international issue, they cracked down in China." Near the end of our conversation, the monk removes his thick glasses. His spectacles and shaved head had masked his true age, but now I see the bags around his bloodshot eyes. "I got a call yesterday from China about one of the refugees being arrested and repatriated [to the North]," Sunim says. "They asked me to do anything. In the past, it was possible to negotiate something"—like allowing China to quietly free them. "But now, it's impossible." And then, like Michael Horowitz, he leans over, like he's going to collapse on the table. **JOSHUA KURLANTZICK**

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# The False Promise of Autocratic Stability

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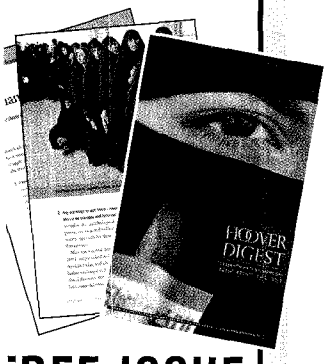

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In my travels to roughly fifty countries, I have been thrown out of only one—Uzbekistan—just a few months after its emergence as an independent state under its first and only president, Islam Karimov. My crime: meeting with human rights activists.

At that time, Karimov's campaign to limit contact with Westerners was not considered a strategic concern for U.S. officials. Immediately following the USSR's collapse, the central aim of American foreign policy in Central Asia was to strengthen Uzbekistan's independence, thus ensuring that the Soviet Union was not reconstituted. Karimov has ruled Uzbekistan as a dictator, yet his repressive ways never impeded his developing close ties with the United States. In the 1990s, Uzbekistan emerged as an active participant in NATO's Partnership for Peace program and appeared eager to check Russian influence in the region.

The early strategy of engaging with Karimov's regime reaped huge short-term benefits for the United States in the immediate aftermath of September 11. Without hesitation, Karimov allowed U.S. and other NATO forces to use Uzbek air bases during the invasion of Afghanistan. The Uzbek base in Karshi-Khanabad proved a great asset in deploying U.S. forces in the region.

Moreover, Karimov's regime looked as though it would be an asset in fighting the war on terror because he claimed that it was successfully fighting the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan, a fundamentalist terrorist organization. Karimov's method of rule seemed both pro-American and stable, atypical of that region.

Autocrats, however, never make for good allies in the long run. First and foremost, the internal stability that dictators provide is never permanent. In the face of societal unrest, oppressive autocrats eventually fuel societal resistance by resorting to even more repression to stay in power, sidelining moderates and strengthening extremists, such as Islamic fundamentalists. These situations rarely serve U.S. interests. Second, they answer to no one and can reverse external commitments at a moment's notice. Friendly dictators quickly become hostile.

Karimov today is demonstrating the limits of relying on autocrats as allies. On May 13, he ordered troops to fire on unarmed demonstrators in Andijon, killing hundreds. The circumstances that sparked this massacre remain murky, but his response has been crystal clear: more repression. Even more surprising has been his decision to blame the West for the Andijon tragedy and turn against the United States. Our once stable and solid ally in Central Asia has now embraced Russian president Vladimir Putin and called for the eviction of U.S. forces. Our close association with Karimov is also an embarrassment to President Bush's liberty doctrine.

Even more threatening is the combustible political situation in Uzbekistan. Thirteen years of dictatorship have not reduced the terrorist threat to Uzbekistan or the region; any regime that must slaughter its citizens to remain in power is not stable. In banking on Karimov as our ally, we are squandering the opportunity to foster the kinds of democratic institutions that make for more enduring U.S. allies.

—Michael McFaul

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*Michael McFaul is the Peter and Helen Bing Senior Fellow at the Hoover Institution.*

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